

# *Memoirs of my Career*



**Joyce Hulks**



# Memoirs of my Career

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## Thanks and Acknowledgements

Thanks to Joyce for entrusting me with this manuscript and giving me carte blanche to do with it what I would

To Aylsham PA Services for typing it up

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Many of the photos used are generic photos relating to learning disabilities rather than specific to the events of this book. A few are from projects I have myself run in the past 20 years. The main reason for this is that the people appearing in these particular photos have all previously given their consent to be used in published materials.

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## Introduction

Around 2005 when I was working for the charity Toc H, I took over the running of the Heartsease Gateway Club in Norwich. It was being run by a small group of parent carers who were feeling their age and didn't want to deal with a lot of the red-tape and other aspects. I felt this fitted my remit at the time and took over running the club. One of the few helpers there who didn't have their own child in the group was a lovely older lady called Joyce. She had spent a lifetime working with people with special needs and I would soon learn more about this.

My own portfolio career has been varied; writer, IT professional and, since 2005, carrying out management and development work in various charities. However, my involvement with people with learning disabilities began back in the eighties when I was volunteering at a community centre that became the venue for a number of parties, organised by the charity Toc H, for local residential homes and day centres.

It was the Toc H connection that enabled me to connect with Joyce and where I learned she had worked at Cell Barnes hospital. Toc H had done a lot of work there and I had a very good friend who had also worked at the hospital and come to Toc H because of that. When I mentioned him to Joyce she knew him so I immediately called him up and let them chat. The following week Joyce arrived at the weekly club with a manuscript. The manuscript that now forms this book.

It tells of her time at Cell Barnes and other places in some depth and is, I believe, a valuable historical document. It didn't make easy reading the first time I went through it as it uses very outmoded language. We must remember that these were different times and historical documents reflect the times they were about.

The memoir covers the sixties to the early eighties and was written around 1987. Therefore the language and some of the care illustrated were quite different. Words such as 'mongol' and 'spastic' were in common use and had not quite been vilified through their use as terms of abuse. Mentally Handicapped remained a term of choice for considerably longer. You will also see dated terms such as 'coloured' once the common and accepted (if not quite acceptable) term for black and other non-white people.

Language evolves constantly anyway and we all know that it was recognised that the type of care we were providing to people with learning disabilities had to change. So, you get this as it was written, and if you find it a tough read because of that, I'm sorry but that is how it was then.

Some may even be offended by the practices carried out at the time the memoir covers but then, looking at how things were different in the past, is presumably one of the reasons you are even looking at this. I am writing this a few days after the events at Whorlton Hall were revealed. All in all I think some slightly patronising past methods are preferable to the barbaric treatment there and at Winterbourne.

I did however change staff and patient names. It is possible that some of the people are still with us and they may not like to be identified beyond all doubt. I considered the risk of them being exploited in any way from the information in these memoirs but concluded it was small: the majority of the patients in here will, sadly, no longer be with us; the readership of this volume is likely to be small and specialist; and the information is at least 30 years old. All in all I think the risk of someone being identified by a person wishing to abuse them in any way is tiny but I will mitigate it further by changing names.

I was advised that I should further reduce the risk of identifying anyone by changing the names of services and wards as well. I fully understand this thinking but, after much soul-searching, choose to leave these as Joyce wrote.

I have also applied a light touch in editing Joyce's words for these are her memoirs and are written as she wrote them. She had her own unique turns of phrase and was from a different generation so may say things that sound dated or even incorrect. I have only corrected words where there was clearly an error and I have occasionally interjected with an explanation which is in the main text in [*italics in brackets*]. Generally though I have let it be, as Joyce handed it to me.

So here it is. A historical account of someone's work in the field of learning disabilities. Nothing more, nothing less.

**Steve Smith**

June 2019



Figure 1 A 1950s advert that perfectly illustrates the use of language in the past

## Cell Barnes Hospital

This summary is based on information published at the Lost Hospitals of London website (<https://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/cellbarnes.html>).

Cell Barnes hospital was located at Highfield Lane, St Albans. In the 1920s a large plot of land adjacent to Hill End Hospital was purchased from the Earl of Verulam by the Hertfordshire County Council for use as a 'colony for mental defectives'. It replaced a smaller site which became the Nicholas Breakspear School.

The Cell Barnes Colony, with initial accommodation for 600, took its first patients on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1933 and was officially opened on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1933. The site also contained Great Cell Barnes House, which was extended for use as a Nurses' Home. The Victorian gardens of the House, with a formal rose garden and a lake, were preserved.

During WW2 it became an Emergency Hospital when St Bartholomew's Hospital in London was mostly evacuated in September 1939.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948 the Colony joined the NHS, when it had 701 beds. It was renamed the Cell Barnes Hospital and came under the control of the Cell Barnes and Harperbury (later, Verulam Group) Hospital Management Committee.

By 1974 the hospital had 779 beds, including those in Tenterden House (50 beds) and at Bennett's End Hospital in Bennett's End near Hemel Hempstead (87 beds).

By 1990 the hospital had 580 patients, but attitudes to the treatment of the mentally ill and mentally handicapped had changed. The large mental hospitals were gradually run down as the patients were transferred to small units of care or hostels.

The Hospital came under the control of the Horizon NHS Trust, along with Harperbury Hospital and Leavesden Hospital. Thus, the Trust could facilitate the closure of the area's three mental handicap hospitals. Leavesden Hospital closed first, in 1995, Cell Barnes Hospital in 1998 and Harperbury Hospital last, in 2001.

Further details can be found in Appendix 1 and here

<https://www.stalbansoutofsightoutofmind.org.uk/content/place/cell-barnes/the-history-of-cell-barnes-hospital>

Records are held by Hertfordshire County Council:

[https://archives.hertfordshire.gov.uk/collections/getrecord/GB46\\_CHM2](https://archives.hertfordshire.gov.uk/collections/getrecord/GB46_CHM2)

The oral memories of a former patient, Ivy Bozer, can be found here. Scroll down to Day 2.

<http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/research/shld/conferences/conference-2010>



# **Memoirs of my Career**

by

## **Joyce Green**

## Starting Out

### Cell Barnes Hospital Children's Ward 1974-1976

It wasn't until I got married in St. Albans in 1963 that I got really involved in voluntary and paid work with the mentally handicapped. This is how it happened:

In about 1967 I had joined the local folk dance club, and one evening they announced they needed one or two people to go to the local mentally handicapped hospital where a Ranger Guide unit met each week; the members being patients at the hospital and residents at a nearby hostel. They had country dancing each month organised by a member of the folk dance club, but she needed to resign. So it came about, after some thought, that I went along together with another woman, who was a teacher and specialised in country dancing (she is, sadly, dead now.) I became very keen on the evenings at the hospital and friendly with the girls, so it wasn't long before I was made a Guider and attended each week, as I still do. More about our activities later.

It was lovely going once a week to the hospital, but I was 'hungry' for more. Then I saw an advertisement in the local paper for a ward orderly at the same hospital. I applied for this and got the job, with no trouble at all.

I started on a children's ward, Ward 6. I shall never forget my first day, - I reported to the Domestic Department and one of the officials escorted me to the ward, warning me not to be afraid or shocked. When I got there he handed me over to the Charge Nurse, a very nice, pleasant man called Stan. Stan briefly showed me round the ward and then took me to a bedroom of about 30 small, low beds and said "make these, please" and left me, just like that! (The date I started was 5<sup>th</sup> February 1974)



*Figure 2 Aerial view of Cell Barnes hospital from information brochure*

After that, I quickly settled down and enjoyed working on the ward. The children were young and old and there were even some babies. Most of my duties at first were bed-making, turning down the beds for the night and keeping the linen cupboard tidy, but, as time went on, I got involved in nursing duties and washed and changed the children. Another duty was escorting, as quite a few of the residents (patients) went to school or physiotherapy. I made a good friend of one of the staff, Violet, and we two did most of the escorting, which was OK on fine days, but pretty rough when it was wet. We got a bit fed up with it and felt other staff members could have helped more.

I gradually got to know the names of the children, but it was not easy to remember them, so I tried writing the names down at home. Now I remember them for life! One of the boys, Derek, I especially cared for, and it happened in a strange way. We had a dysentery epidemic in the ward and Derek was one of those who had to be isolated. I felt sorry for him as I felt he was left alone and not cared for enough (not completely justified) so I went in to him every day and washed him and made him comfortable. No-one minded, but I had to go through the routine of putting on a white overall back to front and washing my hands after in a special liquid soap. Anyway, when Derek came out of isolation, I had a name of "Mother" to Derek; "your son, Joyce" they often said, so they left him to me on most occasions and I fed, dressed and washed him, and even gave him his enema which he, and others had regularly.

Derek was very spastic and doubled up and not able to move much. He was strapped in a chair during the day most of the time. We put him on a bean bag on the floor sometimes. Derek responded to me and smiled at times, and this was mentioned in his notes, to my delight. His mother and an uncle used to visit him and at Christmas they gave me presents for two or three years. One was a beautiful vase and another a key ring with a dainty lady picture. They are on show downstairs in my house. Derek is still on that ward and I see him sometimes.

The other children were all multiply-handicapped, some more than others. Robert was and still is a dear, and I played with him a lot and taught him to 'dance' and 'shake the bed' (action game) and these he remembers to this day. At the time he was partially blind, now he is completely blind.

Stephen was on this ward, a lovable mongol who could not walk at first. The domestic lady, Meg, who was a very good, kind, and conscientious worker, be-friended Stephen together with her husband, Wally, who was a porter at the hospital. After some years they adopted Stephen and gave him a good home and he improved out of all recognition and went to school at Watling View and Haldens Special School. When he was 14 he caught pneumonia and died, and Meg and Wally were heartbroken. There was a great sadness all over the hospital and many people attended his funeral. I sent some flowers, as did many people. Meg and Wally have adopted another boy the same age as Stephen and the same handicap. I just couldn't believe Stephen had died, as he was so full of life. I used to visit them at their home.

Going back to those early days: Stan initiated me on how to give enemas. We had the disposal ones and these needed to be placed in warm water before use for a while. I would check up on the list for the day's requirements and the other members of staff took their respective residents and I usually 'did' Derek and sometimes another resident. You had to place them on their left side, but as I always worked that side it was OK with me. If they were the other way I turned the washing-bed (trolley) round! I could not work the other way!

Stan also showed me how to make up cots by folding the large sheets in a certain way, rather complicated it was. He also showed me how to make special examination beds, but I wasn't too good at this.

(I am writing this on 26.3.1987, and yesterday when I took a resident back to Ward 6, I learnt Derek had died of an ear infection last month).

As I have said, Stan was the Charge Nurse, and his wife was the Sister, and both were in charge of Ward 6 during my time there. In fact, they were not married at the time. They took alternate shifts and both were very pleasant to work with. Stan was very particular with tidiness and, although this was not always popular with the staff, it was really necessary. I remember folding up sheets and towels a certain way and being rather fed up, but I still fold up sheets and towels the special way at home.

I worked on happily for about five years in Ward 6 – I was in a rather fortunate position, being a ward orderly, as I was, to a large extent, 'my own boss'. I felt a little out of place at times, as I was very critical of sub-standard work, like making beds roughly and not changing the children immediately when wet. I used to try to keep these things done my way and perhaps worked a bit out of turn. Nobody tried to stop me, but – well I would perhaps take too long, partly because of this. Maybe I was a bit to finicky, but that's the way with me. I always was slow but particular in all I did, still am. So was my Dad...

The ward orderlies gradually left, until I was the only one left in the whole hospital. They didn't re-employ people as ward orderlies.

During the latter years of my time on Ward 6, the school in the hospital, started small groups in various wards for those not able to get out easily. Derek attended the little group in our ward at times. Unfortunately, it was not overly popular with the nurses as they felt it interfered with all their work. I wasn't too sure. Anyway, I gave them all the help I could and in that way got friendly with the teachers. One was Ailsa and she was instrumental in my next job. Before I come to that I will relate about the group of teachers. They used to come each day and take two or three residents to a little room they had set up. I remember them taking Robert and trying to get him to stop sticking his tongue out by putting a wet sponge on it! Also they set up a huge net arrangement with toys hanging from it for those who could only lie down on the floor. The little room was stocked with many things, books and toys. I think it was a great venture.

One day I noticed some visitors, especially a man who seemed very interested in some of the children. I later heard from Moira that he was a head teacher who was going to set up a special school in Welwyn Garden City and take residents from Cell Barnes Hospital. I was really feeling ready for something a bit more ambitious, so Moira said why don't I apply for a job at the school. Soon after that there was an advertisement for welfare assistants at the new proposed school, and I did apply and was short listed out of about 140 applicants for two places. I attended for an interview and was appointed. I remember having to go to the council place, or something, for the interview and there were a few others waiting. We were all rather nervous. We were being interviewed (one at a time) by a panel of about four people, Moira being one of them. I remember she asked me if I liked swimming. I thanked Moira for 'getting' me the job, but she said it wasn't her – I suppose she meant it was my experience, etc. Anyway, two of us were appointed as welfare assistants at the new special school yet to be named, and which was due to be opened about October 1973. It was being converted from an ordinary school but was not yet finished.

So I went back to Ward 6 and waited....eventually I heard the starting date and gave a month's notice. We were invited to look round the school and meet the headmaster, Dave, who explained what he had in mind, and said he expected to be addressed as "Dave" and we were all to be called by our Christian names.

But before that came my last days at the hospital in Ward 6, and eventually my very last day. I was a little tearful. I had collected quite a few things in my locker, so it was quite a job taking things home over a period of days. They gave me a huge bunch of flowers and a very nice send off and a card signed by many people, including the chief Domestic Supervisor which I was very pleased to see. I still have this card, and the little card which was with the flowers and which said "From all on Ward 6, Teachers and Domestic Supervisors", and it is dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1976. The Domestic Supervisor and her staff had been good to me and overlooked [*I believe Joyce means this in the sense of overseen rather than ignored*] me, but left me to my own devices as I was told was no trouble. I used to have to clock on and off and I did earn quite a bit of overtime money. However, I left and it was a good day. As I left the ward I tearfully said, "Goodbye, exit the last Ward Orderly"!

## School Days

### Haldens Special School, Rosedale, Welwyn Garden City, 1976-1981

After about a week, it was the first day at the special school, yet to be named. It was referred to as Rosedale School until a more suitable name was found. We all met in the staff room and were introduced to each other. There were about four teachers, four welfare assistants 'welfares', and the secretary, the deputy head (Norman) and the Head (Dave). (Later they appointed a nurse). We were told a bit of the plan and each given a list of potential pupils. For a few days we sorted things out and put clothes and other equipment in various small rooms – all a bit tedious. Then came the first day when actual pupils arrived. They were to come in small numbers, 'snowballing' each day.

I was put in a classroom with a teacher (Agnes) and two pupils – they arrived about 9.30-10.00 a.m. – Robert and Deborah. Robert was partially blind – I have mentioned him before – and Deborah was also partially blind, but she was non-ambulant. They were both very quiet and just stood or sat immobile. What to do with them? It was quite a task! We did eventually occupy them in some way. I had had them both in Ward 6 so knew them and Agnes also knew them. We tried to help Robert with music and exercise, and we had to change Deborah's nappies, and Agnes wasn't too keen about that! I can't remember much more about the day except it did drag a bit, so we were glad of subsequent days when more and more pupils came and the days no longer dragged – far from it!

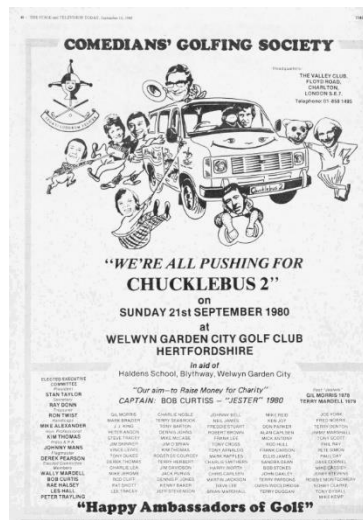


Figure 3 Haldens School Fundraiser 1980

No, I don't remember a lot about those early days. Later I was put in the multiply handicapped group and this is where I was most happy. Kim was the teacher and Rosemary the other welfare. Kim would work out a programme and we would follow it to the best of our ability – I'll quote from a report I made for Trinity Church magazine which explains more: (I was still working there).

*“Life in a Special School. The school was converted from an infants’ school and most of the kitchen and domestic staff stayed on – we were lucky, as the meals are excellent. Elsie, the cook, knows her stuff.*

*I shall never forget the first day. Most of the new staff were unaccustomed to this type of child, so I was at an advantage having worked at Cell Barnes Hospital... We are kept busy changing nappies and washing the children, and when we find time, we do some teaching!*

*These lovable but very low grade children, IQ of about 10 or 12, need stimulation, movement, mobility and signing exercises. For example: for STIMULATION I fetch out, for my special friend Sarah, everyday objects and get her to point to the right one and try to speak its word and show its use. For MOVEMENT we move and/or dance with them to music, the idea being to do it together, and get them to lead as well. MOBILITY is getting them aware of their limbs by moving them about – it is not physiotherapy. SIGNING: we use as far as possible the Makaton System, - Marion, a ‘wobbly’ spastic, was good at this, but sadly she’s moved away from our school.*

*Of course, other classes have other ways of teaching depending on the type of child, higher or lower grade. A few do learn to read and write, and various types of play cards and puzzles are used.*

*We have speech, movement and art therapists to help us, and a nurse, very essential when anyone has a fit or cuts themselves breaking a window (deliberately!) etc.*

*Right from the start Dave made it clear that, apart from the teachers’ ultimate responsibility, all worked together and that teaching and cleaning is everyone’s job. Also that we do not wear overalls and all use Christian names, children and adults. It creates a really friendly atmosphere with no lack of respect. We have about 50 children at present.*

*At Christmas time we had a Bazaar and a Concert, and after that enjoyed ourselves with presents, cards and Father Christmas and Christmas dinner. The concert was held in the evening and we had a vast audience, which made all our hard work worthwhile. I had ‘trained’ a team of four wheelchair country dancers, all vastly different in temperament and ability, and we had our own special item.*

*At the moment I am with a boy’s class of 18 and 19’s who are rough and disturbed, although once you get to know them they come to love you. I made a huge Christmas cracker filled with little packets of sweets, hung it up and, at the appropriate moment, cut it down and all the sweets fell on the floor with a crash. The boys loved it and the subsequent feast!*

*Sometimes the Cell Barnes Hospital Ranger Guides come to the school for the day and entertain by doing country dances. Holidays, camping and otherwise, are most successful, as are also the weekly riding and occasional swimming sessions. We go swimming at Broxbourne Lido, Lea Valley; Sarah was frightened at first, but now she and I play happily in quite deep water.” (Trinity URC magazine; February 1981)*

We had some very happy times and were a good team in the multiply handicapped class; that is going back to before I quoted from the magazine.

Lunch times were hectic as most of the ambulant pupils from other classes went to the hall or playground for lunch time with a teacher and helpers (welfares) while some staff had their break. Some of the kitchen staff came in with us to our classroom and helped us change the nappies. We also had a few additional pupils, so it was all very hectic and exhausting, but I loved it, dirty bottoms and all! We cleaned them with Johnson's baby lotion and had to work on the floor as we had no "beds" like Ward 6, (I was always complaining!) Then we played with them, and I must tell you about Mark and his nurse-play.

Mark, a spina bifida and hydrocephalus, is a fairly intelligent boy, but can also be very demanding as he likes attention. We used to get all the dolls and teddies etc. out and make "beds" with the chairs and then role-play a hospital scene. He would often be the doctor and I the nurse and we would start at the home of the 'patient' and take him or her to hospital, after ringing the doctor (G.P.) or attending the surgery. Sometimes the doctor would come and visit saying the 'patient' must go to hospital. Then we would put him or her to bed and nurse him or her in various ways. Mark loved it, but I had to be careful he didn't hog the scene every day, as other pupils didn't understand role-play hardly at all.

Mary, one of the pupils who is very spastic and in a special wheelchair, loves to be taken out of her chair and put on a bean bag. Mary is fairly intelligent and would understand role-play a little. In the summer we would get the paddling pool out and put the pupils in swimming costumes. Some of them loved this activity. I put my costume on one day and joined them, to the amusement of all!

During my time in the special school – it had now been named Haldens' Special School ESN(S) – I and other Welfares attended training courses at the Teacher Training Centre at Hatfield. These were of about six [*courses of*] one day a week duration, or two days a week duration. The first was a general course with many subjects, which could only be touched on, like epilepsy and art therapy. The other course was a speech therapy course. Now I couldn't understand why some residents and pupils could not talk, but after the latter course I realised what a miracle it was for any of us to speak. I learnt that unless a person had a [*developmental*] build-up of a normal person from birth in the right order stimulating the brain bit by bit, the person could never complete the learning process. We had some very interesting lectures and heard all about the progress of a baby from the very first cry to the "da da" and all the other growth of speech. We were also advised how to stimulate pupils who had no or little speech to some form of communication; one was, when feeding we had to keep the head up to exercise the throat. This I practised with Deborah. Of course we learnt about sign language (and later had Makaton sessions at the school) but it was pointed out we must say the word with the action.



During the years at the school the staff not only changed but grew. We now had an Art Therapist and a Speech Therapist and Music and Movement Therapist and a nurse. I was particularly interested in art therapy and read books to help me decide what to do with various pupils of differing abilities. We had a fairly large selection of books in the school staff-room. At Christmas time we, in our classroom, would make and paint red a big round posting box for all the Christmas cards. This used to be overflowing, and the box would invariably break! Dave would hand out the cards at Assembly on the Thursday before the Christmas holiday and the presents with Father Christmas on the Friday. It was not only the pupils who received cards and presents! All the classes' staff would wrap up parcels for their pupils. The expressions on the children's faces were delightful as they received their presents from the mythical Father Christmas (usually Alan).



*Figure 4 Christmas party at a Hertfordshire project.  
Copyright Steve Smith*

Assemblies were held in the hall once a week, I think on Fridays. These were usually not religious but none the less helpful. I don't seem to remember much about them! We would gather again in the hall before the pupils went home, chiefly to get them organised, and we would assemble on other special occasions.

P.E. Yes, we had P.E. in the hall as any other school does, with classes taking it in turns to use the apparatus. We had a rope, climbing frame, and a trampoline. Most of my experience of P.E. was with the multiply handicapped, and some were only able to go on the trampoline lying down so we would get on and jump up and down to give them the sensation. (The first time in my life I had been on a trampoline!) Others, more able, would sit, kneel or even stand with help and we would get on with them and jump or bounce up and down with them holding our hands. It was really hard work and we, staff, took it in turns of five-minute sessions. I really found it tough! (I was cross with myself because I was afraid to jump and sit down with a bounce!)

At other times we would have music sessions. Carol was especially good at music having qualifications, and we would have sessions in the hall, and sessions with her class pupils, the nursery (youngest pupils), who were in a classroom next to ours. That is our class would join her class for joint sessions, and very hilarious they were at times, and very enjoyable for both the pupils and us. We had instruments and they loved making a loud noise, but we would try and get them quiet as well. We had many old favourites and new songs. "The Bear went over the Mountain" was one favourite. "Four little Speckled Frogs" was another, and for this we would stand four pupils on a form or chairs and get them to jump down at the appropriate time. They loved that. Carol played the piano.

Music and Movement sessions under the guidance of Tina, the expert, were good. She had special music on tape and would get us to do exercises with the pupils. Lots of these and other activities were to get them aware of themselves and their fellow pupils, and an example is one when they took turns to go in a circle made by the rest of us.

We had a cooking room and the classes would take turns to have cooking sessions. When, later on, I was put in Alan's class of big, rough boys, we would have cooking sessions. Also with Agnes' class we had excellent sessions. We would have all the ingredients and let the pupils taste a bit of each ingredient (nice or nasty!) before mixing.

I was, for a while, in a classroom with really rough pupils – worse than Alan's – but this used to frighten me. I tried to overcome it but had to give up. I got really uptight, and the other welfares noticed and told the teachers. These type of pupils were not for me, but the other staff sympathised with me and did not make me feel like a failure.

I got to love Alan's class, but not at first. Alan is a very nice, older, man, a trained ordinary teacher, but tough, as he had been a miner and knocked around [*As in lived a bit*]. I wasn't sure of him at first – but after a week or two we got on very well. His pupils, all male, were an interesting bunch. One was a coloured chap, David, and he was the roughest. He would spit, kick and scratch, but Alan did wonders with him by gaining his confidence. Alan was not afraid of them. David would do what Alan wanted and almost worshipped him. David's chief occupation was playing with a stick, but we tried to get him interested in other things. If Alan went out of the room I got scared, but we agreed that if David got violent I would go out of the room and yell "Alan" – this I did on a few occasions; but I feel I got David's friendship a little.

Then there was Will, who was stone deaf and would drink water until he was sick! He was not violent, but very awkward, and if he was really roused would upturn a table. There was another Will who loved playing with balls of wool and he would pull wool out of mats and carpets. So as they say, with art or anything, make a negative action into a positive one, so I got him, with great effort to make a wool collage! Billy loved to tear up bits of paper and was a bit of a menace, so I got him to make a paper collage. He even seemed to enjoy it. The strange thing about Billy was that, when he had finished with anything he would put it away in a drawer or somewhere. He was very particular. I got to like Billy and he was one of my favourites. He could be a bit violent and kick, etc. and I had to be 'rescued' at times. But, being small, he was easier to manage.

Sarah was another favourite of mine. A lot of people found her very difficult, but I got on fine with her. (Later - after the school closed – I had her home for the day on two occasions. She now comes to Recreations, but more about that later.) When Sarah first came to the school, she followed me everywhere and Dave said "play it cool" thinking, as I did, that it was not good. I must admit that I rather enjoyed Sarah's liking for me. But, later, when I was in the classroom with her we dropped that to a large extent, and I gave her more of my attention. Someone said to me, when I voiced worry over favouritism, "let them have all they can: as they get little compared with other children who live at home. Also they don't seem to get jealous so much as other 'normal' people do".



*Figure 5 A young woman from a North London project.  
Copyright Steve Smith*

Marion was another interesting pupil. She was in Carol's class in the Nursery, and had been on Ward 6 when I was working there. She was, I'm afraid, rather spoilt, but had great character. She would lose her temper and people were afraid it might harm her, as I believe she had a weak heart or something. So spoilt she was. (I see her on odd occasions now as she is in a hostel near where I go frequently. She has grown, but she is the same, if a good bit matured!)

Shirley from Kim's class moved to a special school and hospital and we were sad to lose her. (Her mother was always extremely good to her.) I think it was Northampton and one day we took some pupils on a trip to see her.

The Ranger Girl Guides, as mentioned in the magazine quote, came regularly for a day and had lunch with us. After lunch they would show country dances which they had been rehearsing at their meetings. In the mornings, the Rangers would help in various classrooms, even help toileting and changing nappies.

At lunch, those on drugs had their pills from me and I was proud to be trusted with them. The nurses in the wards would put them in envelopes clearly marked as to how many to give and when. The Rangers travelled back in various buses and ambulances and sometimes it was rather tricky fitting everyone in. They loved coming and it helped them to keep their promise of "being of service in the community".

As I have said, I was in Moira's class for a while. She had higher grade pupils and so she taught them academically. I am afraid I was not much help, as I did not seem to understand the deep meaning behind all she taught. She had charts and lots of very specialised card games, which progressed by learning bit by bit. I tried to understand but am sorry to say I was a bit thick! Also I got rather fed up, and a bit critical as a result. So I wasn't there for long. Moira has now moved to a school in London where her great talents are far more used; I believe as a head teacher.

With all this teaching, we had to learn that, what is naturally learnt by most unbrain-damaged children, is not learnt by this special type of child. Therefore, we had to understand the development process of the human being, and, for instance, realise that picking up an object has to be taught whereas a 'normal' (I don't like that word) child learns it unaided. This is what, of course, the teachers learnt during their training as specialised teachers in this field.

Craft Fairs were a yearly activity, especially leading up to Christmas. We would bring some of the more able pupils from the hospital, and they felt very honoured. Sometimes we got local craft people to book a stall and we had some very fine crafts. About this time I learnt to do Quilling (strip-paper craft) and sold some of my creations, which included Christmas tree decorations and brooches.

Escorting. Yes, more escorting! I was involved with this from the beginning, as I lived in St. Albans and it was a means of getting to Welwyn Garden City. We had an ambulance and two mini-buses when we first opened. When I first started I was in one of the mini-buses with a dear, elderly fellow as the driver (Jim).

We were very happy. Each day we would go passed a road which led to a place called Symonshyde and a pupil called Simon would say “that’s my Hyde!” Later, when the driver left, - a sad, sad day ( Dave gave him a parting gift of a bottle of drink) – I was transferred to the ambulance.

Escorting on the ambulance was as we had to load up and unload all the wheelchairs, and often we had so many it was a real squash and we had to fix them in carefully to make room. Most of the pupils would stay in their chairs. I used to enjoy the trips. I believed in sitting amongst the pupils and chatting and singing with them, so we had some very good times.

One nurse who came (we had student nurses as part of their training) also mixed well and he was great. We had this David I mentioned from Alan’s class, and he was terrible at times. Also Will would have to get out and ‘toilet’ and no stopping him! Once this happened in the main shopping street at Welwyn Garden City. After that we provided a bucket!

## Holidays

Each year most of the pupils, if not all, went away on some sort of holiday. Some went to Cuffley Camp and had a great time. On one occasion I, with other members of staff, visited the campers and they were well into all the activities of camping. It was Alan's and another class who were there.

Aldeburgh, Suffolk – June 1980 I went with the multiply-handicapped pupils to Aldeburgh near where they have yearly music festivals. We stayed in a house right on the front opposite a boating pool. I have a postcard in front of me which I sent home and which says "Having a great time. We're at a farm park today. Stephen sends his love (there follows some scribble). The sun is shining and it's really warm." The house was a fairly old property and rather in need of repair, but that suited us, as it didn't really matter if the furniture and place was damaged a bit. We, however, put ornaments out of reach! The house had a basement with cooking facilities and we ate down there. There was a living room on the ground floor and the usual bathrooms and bedrooms upstairs. There weren't enough beds for all of us and we, staff, had to sleep on the floor on lilos. I elected to sleep in the same room as a pupil, Jeremy, who was spastic, of whom I was especially fond. Unfortunately he wriggled and tossed and turned in his sleep, so I didn't get a good night's sleep!

Jeremy and I had a good time in the day time. One day, in the early evening, when the rest of the staff decided to go to a pub for a meal or something to eat, Jeremy and I stayed behind and I pushed him in his wheelchair along the promenade and the next promenade until we came to a dead end. We both thoroughly enjoyed it, especially when we got to the quieter part. We were out for a long time.

We would go down to the beach in a party, over the stones to the pebbles, and to the sea edge, but were not sure about struggling over with Jeremy in the wheelchair. But we did and the delight on his face paid dividends. It was a really hard task getting the wheelchair, with Jeremy in it, over the stones, I can tell you!

Marion, from Carol's class, and I would go for walks along the 'front' into the centre of Aldborough. She had made friends with a lovely dog, Bracken, and saw him several times. We had to stop her going into a house after him on one occasion!

One day we were all out when a car pulled up. We thought the lady driver was going to tell us off for something (some people were not so friendly and/or sympathetic), but she said she had a large house nearby, just up the hill from our house, with an out-door swimming pool, and would we like to use it. So we paid several visits there and all had a great time. Unfortunately the weather changed to cooler, so we couldn't go the last day. But it was so kind of her, and we did enjoy it, all of us. I still have her address, but I think she has moved now. She had a relation who was handicapped.

We would go out in the mini-bus/ambulance to places like Lowestoft – I had several swims, I was a bit demanding about the swims, I'm afraid! Some people, public, treated us to ices.

Another outing was to the Snape Maltings where they have the Aldeburgh Festival Concerts, and we saw the concert hall and other places. There was a huge Henry Moore sculpture in the grounds and the children climbed all over it! I remember and can see this Henry Moore sculpture to this day in my mind, and the children did love it. There was also a stream nearby and a bridge and we walked all round the gardens or field. I believe the bridge was a bit rickety, and the ground rather bumpy with long grass, and difficult for wheelchairs. I also remember a huge restaurant with a stone paving floor and we had a meal there. We also saw all around the craft fair which was in another building where they also had local artists' pictures. One pupil wet on the floor of the restaurant!

On the way home at the end of the holiday we called in at a pub and they had a super meal. In fact, we had other pub meals during the week and they were good. (I had a cold while away and a bad sore throat and they gave me whisky with hot water, urrh!) We had a super holiday and I shall never forget it.



*Figure 6 A holidaymaker from a different Hertfordshire project.  
Copyright Steve Smith*

I went with the horse riding group one day and helped the pupils on to horses, but was not brave enough myself to have a go!

## Concerts

The concert is explained in the magazine bit, but here is more about the concert. WE had other good concerts in afternoons, although they were not well attended by parents and friends, presumably as folk were at work. But this last one, not long before the school closed, was simply great. Each class had worked very hard at their act or acts and we had all sorts of things, from songs to playlets and dances and sketches. Barbara and James, the art therapists, had worked hard getting the scenery up; they used lots of silver paper and had stars pinned on black paper. The hall was transformed. I remember Andrew as a ventriloquist; he had a case with various soft toys and he kept taking them out and saying “hallo’ or something – he didn’t understand what a ventriloquist was, but had us in stitches!

Our country dance group had practised for ages, and I often had to drag the pupils out of Art Therapy to practise. It wasn’t easy as I felt I was intruding. Moira did a lovely sketch with her class, I can’t remember what she did, but know it was excellent. I wish I could remember.

I have not mentioned my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday which was a great occasion. I thought they had forgotten as no card seemed forthcoming as was the usual practise, but later they all gathered in the hall and presented me with a large bunch of flowers. (No drink as they knew I didn’t like it.). This happened in 1977, Jubilee year.

Then came my last, very sad day, just a few weeks after the great concert. We had a pop band to play in the afternoon and then they all got together for a party and I was presented with a tapestry to do, ‘Pinky’, companion to Constable’s famous ‘Blue Boy’. It is now proudly framed and up at home. I also had a huge, huge Easter Egg and lots of home-made cards and good wishes and thanks from James. The local Press had been there in the afternoon and they reported the pop concert with pictures and reported about my leaving party with a picture of me and my favourite pupil, Sarah. I still have this paper-cutting. I was very sad to go.

The school closed in early 1982, in spite of many of us writing to the Council at Moira’s request. After the school closed we had a reunion staff party and I met old friends – it was great. I didn’t recognise Carol as she had slimmed!

Talking of Carol, she got married while the school was still open and we took Stephen, Marion and others from Carol’s class to the church service. It was really nice. It was at Carol’s Free Church in Welwyn Garden City centre. The current secretary, Jenny, wrote to me later to say she also had got married. Also Kim, the multiply-handicapped class teacher (lovely girl), married Norman, the Deputy Head. They moved, as Norman got a headship at a special school. END OF SCHOOL.



## After School

After leaving the school I tried in vain to get a proper job for two years, but I think I needed the rest, so perhaps it was just as well. However, I saw an advertisement in the paper for occasional minding or baby-sitting arranged by MENCAP so I wrote, just about the time I was leaving Halden's School. This opened up yet another wealth of experience. First I had a post-card inviting me to attend a meeting for prospective helpers and parents at Hatfield. After that meeting, I kept in contact but only had a little success until the social worker at my church introduced me to a mother of a handicapped boy of about six who lived near me.

I used to look after this boy during the day when his school was closed, and after school until Mum came home from work. This was Nigel and he was a nice, hyperactive boy full of beans and wanting all the attention. (Sometimes I would 'babysit' and stay the night.) We would go for lovely walks as there were fields near me. Sometimes we'd get lost – panic! The grass was very high and we had fun hiding in it. Other days we would go round the roads nearby and watch the bees on the grass verge. Sometimes I would take Nigel on a visit to a friend, but this was not a success as he got a little jealous if ignored while we chatted.

I had a lot of pleasure from looking after Nigel, and it was a sad day when his mother left work. So goodbye Nigel, except for babysitting, but I still keep in touch with the family and we are good friends. Nigel goes to boarding school.

After that period, I had several requests for baby-sitting and I had to watch that I didn't over or double-book! It was fascinating to go in various homes, large and small. (Most of these 'jobs' were paid by the families themselves as the Social Services didn't operate payments in St. Albans then; they do now). After a while, and during the latter part of that time, I had a call from Borehamwood Social Services and the consequence was that I had a few weekends away at three separate families. One house had a goldfish in the sitting room!

The handicapped person's name was Shaun from the last mentioned household, and we had some good times together. Mostly I went to Shaun's house, but on one occasion I had him home and we went for a trip to St. Alban's Abbey and around the Verulamium Lake. At the Abbey they had some convention or something, a Roman Catholic function for young people. We nosed around and were invited to join them. (Shaun was about 17 years' old). After singing some hymns and listening to a talk, they had the passing of Peace, and Shaun was overwhelmed by people hugging and kissing him!

There was a teenage girl who was completely immobile, but very sweet. She lived in a large, expensive house. That was, for me, an easy job. The dog was the biggest problem! The mother always left me a lovely supper; I was treated well. Father would bring me up a cup of tea and a biscuit in bed in the morning.

Near them lived Will, about 18 years' old. He had been at Halden's School so I knew him. His parents asked me to sit in and stay the night as they were going to a 'do' until about 3 a.m. Now, Will, I knew, runs away, but I was assured always comes back. Well, no sooner had the parents gone, he went out – so I waited and waited – getting worried and more worried. He did come back, but soon went out again. Eventually it began to get dark, so I worried more. The trouble was, I expect, the more I fussed the worse he got. In the end I could wait no longer, so went out to find him. Which I did, but the more I tried to coax him the more he ran! He led me to Watling View Special School, where he attends, quite a distance, and went over the fence. I didn't/couldn't climb over, I'm not that agile! So I lost him. I went all the way home and – waited. After quite a time in came grandfather with Will. He said Will often visits him; a nice man he was. All went well for a while after grandfather had gone, and I tried to divert Will by pretending not to know how to light the gas for a cup of coffee. He helped me, and then ran out again! Oh dear! He came back; with grandfather again..... Later he went out again.

During this time, several hours, the parents phoned at intervals to know if all was well. I told them all was not well! By that time you can imagine the state I was in. Anyway, mother said "get him in his pyjamas and he'll calm down." Little did she know how wrong she was. He did put the pyjamas on; but after that we had a spate of running out in the street completely naked (the neighbours seemed rather used to his capers) and taking my duvet out and really trying me out. He locked me out of the house by shutting the front door with him inside and it took me quite a time to persuade him to let me in. He'd come back from outings and lie down and make rude noises with his bottom.

As I neared despair, I realised he was getting tired – it must have been midnight by then. So I suggested bed. That failed, with more 'outings' at first, some in the garden, but he got more tired, and at last I sat in the bedroom by the door blocking it and after a while he actually went off to sleep. By 3a.m., I crept out and went to bed. Not sleeping of course, but I did relax the moment I heard Mum and Dad come in. Will was a 'pain' at breakfast, but it was out of my hands then. What an experience! They've not asked me to mind again!

Actually I quite like Will and he would never hurt anyone. I see him on and off at Cell Barnes hospital and out in the streets.

Eileen, near me, had four girls, one handicapped. I often babysat for them; the handicapped girl was the least worry! The smallest was about four years old and she would not go to bed at night and would keep getting up and she kept me awake. She would end up in bed with Jenny, her eldest sister. The family were quite a contrast to the other homes, homely and untidy! But they were generous – I had a lovely breakfast, always two eggs. And at Christmas they gave me a lovely china teapot, too good to use. Also an Irish Shillelagh. I believe they were used to 'bonk' people on the head.

I haven't mentioned the home in Borehamwood where the father belonged to a Country and Western club. They would enact cowboy and Indian outdoor plays and have real guns and 'hang' people. He showed me his equipment and costumes, which were really fine, and had to be handled with care. He also had a lovely feathered Indian headdress, it was huge, and a spear, which was also very beautiful. The Ranger Guides invited him and his squaw to do a dance and show their things at their meeting. This fellow had a lovely gun which he showed me, and he took great care keeping it clean and in order. He nearly lost his temper with me when I pressed or nearly pressed the trigger! He had several children, one handicapped, and we would go out to the park and other places to play. Behind the house were fields and open places, ideal for children. Also, behind, was the railway line and an Express would come along at regular intervals.



*Figure 7 Clients from various Hertfordshire and North London groups enjoying a dance.  
Copyright Steve Smith*

About this time I was introduced to Carla, who I knew as a nurse at Cell Barnes Hospital. She had started a home for mentally handicapped children to stay for short periods in a caravan at Bricket Wood, and I went and stayed several times while she had some time off. She had a helper, who was mildly handicapped, and we would look after the one or two residents. In fact she looked after the dog and cat and I the residents! One day the cat came in bed with me! I sometimes had to take one resident to London; Jim, my husband, drove us; to a place for handicapped people, near the Tate Gallery. All went well, but what traffic jams!

One of the difficulties with most of these jobs was, although I looked after the children and adults, the parents liked to have the 'upper hand', and I was prevented from doing many things on my own initiative. (The exception would be the last mentioned job with Carla). Some parents were 'worse' than others, although I did appreciate that it was natural and right that this should be so. But at the school and hospital I was used to taking far more on, like doing painting and other things, and washing, bathing and nappy changing. However, it was a great honour to be in sole charge when the parents were out. So, I was glad to get back to working at Cell Barnes Hospital. But before I get on to that, there's Martin and Jean to write about.

Jean is a teenager who I 'minded' several times. Her mother was very good indeed and let me use my own initiative – I spilt some ink on the carpet one day but she was so good about it. We used to do a lot of craft things and one was Calligraphy, hence the ink! Jean has a sister and brother, and when Mum and Dad had gone we did all sorts of things, quilling brooches from strips of coloured paper was another. Jean and I became very good friends and still are. Her mother, Zara, doesn't speak English much.

Jean lives in a large house and has her own bedroom and bathroom, which is all pink. On her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday she had a bit of extra fuss and I gave her a silver chain and cross. She now goes to boarding school.

Martin came into my life a bit later. He went to an ATC (Adult Training Centre) in Hemel Hempstead by taxi, and they needed an escort. Another fellow went as well, but he had Paul as an escort, a charming elderly man, but his 'charge' caused him lots of trouble as he was unpredictable. One day he slashed the taxi with a pencil. It took all our wits to control him at times.

Back to my Martin, who was quite, quite the reverse. He was totally dependent on other people, and permanently in a wheelchair. But he had a lovely personality. Martin has his mother and father at home, and they had a lift built in the house to his bedroom.) We had some interesting taxi drivers. The main one did not speak to us hardly at all, but sometimes we had lady taxi driver, and she was very friendly. She dressed in very exotic clothes. Another driver took us on a tour of the countryside. I would call on Martin in the morning, his home is only about two minutes from my place, and we would wait for the taxi.

As I have said, the fellow, Andrew, who came as well as Martin was quite a character (He attended Halden's School when I was there.) They had to watch him at home as, if he got a match, he would set light to his bed, and did on one occasion. He also drew on the walls and they were frequently decorating. He also threw objects over the fence next door. His mother used to escort when Paul was not available, she was very patient with Andrew, and we, the mother and I, became good friends.

Martin later attended a local Adult Training Centre (ATC) with organised transport, so I was no longer needed, but on occasions after that I 'minded' him while the parents went out, and we would play my record of a group called the Yetties with all the old war songs like "Run rabbit, run". He loved them, and we had great times.

Back to Jean; I took her to the St. Albans Carnival one year to see all the floats processing. We went round the assembly place at Bernards Heath and then took up our position in the road. She loved it all and we threw pennies to the lorries and people with buckets and had lots of leaflets and badges and even an orange. MENCAP had a float, and we went to see it at Bernards Heath and met the people on it, most of whom we knew.

On another occasion, Nigel and I and another handicapped girl and her mother went to see the Queen when she came to St. Albans to open the new Chapter House at the Abbey. We were near the City Hall, with of course hundreds of other folk, and we all had flags. I'm sure the Queen saw us.

PLAYGROUP. This was organised during the school holidays by MENCAP and I helped, and still do. Jean attended and I soon got to know the others who became firm friends. This led to the Gateway Club which met each Monday evening and I joined the helpers. We had grand evenings and I taught them some simple country dancing. We did painting and other activities and, of course, singing. (This Club has recently closed because of lack of members – in 1987.) Kevin and Stephen, who were nicknamed "twins," were in Carol's class at Halden's School and were great friends. Kevin went to the Gateway Club, and Peter who was also at Halden's School.

I did go to 'babysit' at Welwyn Garden City quite near the school where I worked. So I had quite an 'innings'. When I went to Borehamwood they organised a taxi, a lovely saloon car, for me and the lady driver was very nice, and I've seen her since then.

## Back to Cell Barnes

This last period was about two years, and I was always looking for another daily job at a school or hospital. I applied for a position at an ATC in St. Albans and was unsuccessful, and the same at a deaf school very near to where I live. However, later there was an advertisement for a nursing assistant in the Recreation Department at Cell Barnes Hospital. I applied and sent the two references requested – SIX MONTHS later I had a reply offering me an interview. I went, and met the staff, some I knew already, had the interview with the Sister, Meg, and the Officer in Charge, Fred, and was appointed on the spot. While I was there a resident was walking about with his trousers down, so I pulled them up. I was spotted and they said it helped me to get the job!



Figure 8 1977 advert for Nursing Assistants at Cell Barnes.

The Staff Nurse, Mandy, showed me round. This was on the Wednesday and I started the following Monday. Mandy explained that they were planning to start a toy library.

Before I started at Recreations and during my MENCAP 'minding' period, I joined the church group which visited Shenley Hospital for the mentally ill on Monday evenings. We had two different groups of visitors which meant I went once a month. They were quite different from mentally handicapped people; very quiet and slow, but very appreciative. We had a programme and did all sorts of things; crafts, outings in the summer, music and movement, Bingo and other board games, and musical evenings, etc.

When I joined, I introduced country dancing and much later we had a group from my local folk dance club. The evening went very well, better than when I did it on my own. When I started at the hospital again, I opted out of Shenley Hospital, but they still have me back twice a year for crafts and dancing, and it was during this time the club came for dancing.

Anyway, on my first day when I went to the Recreation Department, I was put in with Mandy, and thus started some very pleasant days for me. Mandy was really good and took working with the residents very seriously indeed. She planned the day so there was always something to do with the residents. These people were various ages from 19 to 60, but with an IQ of about 12 or under (like about six months' old to about two years, mentally). Their main trouble was most of them had no sense of curiosity, although some were a little curious about objects.

We had a bit of a mixed ability group at that time. Mandy would start them off by putting them in a circle with a table in the middle with an object she or I had brought from home. We would watch their reaction. One of the 'higher grade' residents, Arnie, always went to the object and inspected it, turning it round and round in his hand. Simon reacted to fluffy things – by screaming. He was obviously scared of fluffy objects. (Later, much later, about two years, Arnie was in my group, and we had a tape recorder which he would plug in for me and turn it on.)

Mandy insisted on quiet. In the wards at that time, (it seems better now on reflection), the nurses tended to shout at the residents. (Incidentally, they were called 'patients' at that time, but I'll carry on calling them 'residents' as they are now). Mandy believed, and I agreed, that fear is not the way to treat mentally handicapped people, so, even when reprimanding them, we should keep our voices low and quiet. I am afraid she had to reprimand me at times about raising my voice!

After all had arrived, we greeted everyone with a singing rhyme like "Good morning to you (twice), Good morning, Suzie, Good morning to you". Then we would have an activity of painting or sticking, or music or cooking. Mandy believed that one at a time was best, so she put the activity on the table or tables and had them up in turn. I thought this was a bit tedious. Mandy did say she did certain things [*her way*], but admitted she may not be right all the time.

The slight exception to the one-at-a-time was when we had music, but even then they were handed an instrument and encouraged in turn to use it loud and soft. For cooking we mixed the ingredients, again getting the residents to take turns at stirring.

We sang "Stir this cake, stir this cake, Stir it as nicely as you can, Stir this cake". It was all rather laborious! For the morning song we would have the same one each day of the week, changing each Monday, so that the staff as well as the residents didn't get bored.



We had a list of songs:

(example) *“Wind the bobbin up (twice)  
Pull, pull, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP.  
Wind the bobbin up (twice)  
Pull, pull, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP.  
Point to the ceiling, point to the floor,  
Point to the window, point to the door.  
Clap your hands, ONE, TWO, THREE,  
Put them down upon your knee”.*

That was a very good song with actions. For the window we would take them over to it and get them to touch it. “Eyes and ears, mouth and nose” was another action song. Mandy had some tapes which she used and would also have a general meeting of all groups each Thursday in the hall with the tapes. (I now have bought these tapes and we use them at the Trefoil Guild – see later account).

Well, came the sad day when Mandy was leaving. I got all the members of the group to draw a bit and made a large card for her. Mandy believed that the residents should be aware of something different happening and be prepared for her leaving. During this time another Mandy was working with us, an ex-teacher. She was very self-assured and good at music. Mandy covered a window a day, with paper, in the room until by Friday all the windows were covered. She then had a party and when that was over she had them all up to her one at a time signing to Brahms Lullaby:

*“Goodbye, Robert, goodbye, Goodbye, Robert, goodbye”  
And when all had been sung to, she sang:  
“Goodbye, everyone, goodbye, Goodbye, everyone, goodbye.  
It’s sad to go, but do not cry,  
Goodbye, everyone, goodbye.”*

Then she disappeared and we got them all back to the wards.



Before I arrived on the scene, Mandy had created, with her group, a huge sculpture creation almost reaching the ceiling, out of all sorts of odds and ends on a clay base. She used streamers, cardboard and crepe paper and other bits and pieces. It was very good and stayed in our room for ages after Mandy had left. It did, of course, collect a lot of dust and dirt as we couldn't move it, so one day, when I was alone with the group, we had a great demolition activity. It was sad to see it go, but we had great fun and felt a lot cleaner!

Mandy had also made a "Lady" out of a huge box which had contained a vacuum cleaner. This was also a great work of art with an apron, hair etc. She also drew the various animals and insects on cards for the "old woman who swallowed a fly" song. We would hand one each to the residents and they would put it in the old woman's large mouth in turn. The last one who gave her the horse when she "died, of course," would knock the old girl down, amidst great excitement from all. This "lady" also outlasted Mandy. There was a large rubber spider on elastic tied in her front which we would shake for the spider that "wriggled and tickled inside her".

After Mandy left, Mandy (2) took over the room. We were working together as equals as we were both nursing assistants but she was more capable and overpowering (for want of a better word). I didn't find this easy, but made the best of it. This Mandy was voluntary for a while before this, although she had been on the staff previously. She was really looking for a teaching post in a special school, and eventually got one. During her time we tried hard to carry out Mandy (1)'s policies and this included Makaton signing sessions for most of the residents in our group. These were very good but I found it a bit difficult. I'm afraid I got a bit uptight and felt I was not as good as the Lindas. True – I couldn't remember the signs on the spot, and it was not helpful or practical to pause to look the signs up. Mandy (1) made me feel helpful in everything but Mandy (2) didn't have the nurse approach either with me or the residents. I got rather tide-up and afraid I couldn't cope, especially when or just before she left.

The other members of staff didn't 'go along' with the Lindas' ideas and told me not to worry. But when Mandy (2) left I tried, in my way, to carry on the work, and still did until I left, working often on my own with up to eight residents.

Before this, and not long after I had joined Recreations, I, as the 'floating' member of staff, was put in Jane's room. I expected it all to be strictly programmed like Mandy's group, but was very surprised indeed to find it quite the reverse. Jane of course, having had no training, could not be expected to work the same way, so it wasn't so surprising. I found it very frustrating after the discipline of Mandy's room, and tried to implement some programmes myself. The main thing we did was to undress a doll and wash her, her hair, and her clothes. This was quite a success. (Later, when I tried something similar when back in Mandy (2)'s room, she said "don't use dolls, its babyish!")

When Mandy (2) also left I was, as I have said, in sole charge of Group 1, and thus started some very pleasant days for me and the residents. Charlie improved and so did others as I got to know and trust them and they me. I won't go into great detail as you can see the progress, if any, from my notes I wrote when I left. Also I am not trying to take all the credit for any improvement, it all happened over the years from the beginning, and I was just a part of it.

These pleasant days went on for one or two years. Now and again I had student nurses to help. This was at times good and sometimes not so good, depending on the students and how we related. I can be awkward and want to do things my way and get the feeling of uselessness and inadequacy easily. For this reason I preferred to work on my own, and I seemed to achieve more on my own. My failing, but there you are.

So time went on until Pauline came in charge of our groups, the other groups were the Social Training Department groups which had joined us by now as the Department had closed down. Pauline restructured things, greatly, things needed to change, and when I came back from a camping holiday with the Rangers I found my group had been split into high and low grades and intermingled everywhere! I was to work in the hall with all the other low grade residents and other staff. It was a shock, a great shock and I was mad.

During my time still in the room, Mandy and I had introduced tea pouring, getting the residents to pour their own tea. We put the tea in the cups first so they could see the change in colour when adding the milk, a habit I abandoned in time as it was pointed out to me it was not as other people did it. I tried this in the hall, but with all the distractions it was no good, and I got no support from the staff. It was a hopeless situation. The Social Training had taken over the rooms! I nearly left!

After a time I was told not to panic by Pauline – the result was I was put back in a room, not my nice big one with a through draught when it was hot – two lots of windows – but a smaller one with one set of windows. I/We either roasted or had the door open with outside noises and distractions in the summer. But I made it our own, and again started more very pleasant days, as I got to know my new group, some of whom I had known previously.

I keep going back, but I must talk about Art Therapy. We started having an Art Therapist, Trevor, come weekly to our room while I think both the Lindas were still there. He was very good and showed us all sorts of things, but chiefly how to let the residents do it themselves. Even if they only make one mark, or even none, it is their work; we just offer the utensils and let them investigate. We had some surprising results. I remember him making sort of envelopes and putting them on the wall and, week by week, adding the residents' art work. Trevor left for landscape gardening and Mia came in his place, and she showed us more things, even used mirrors and small toys in sand.

One day, I was on my own by then, Amy phoned me and said could I keep the residents in the hall for a while. She came and disappeared into our room, and when we were summoned we found a white room! There was white paper on the floor and on the walls and furniture. She got them to paint on the walls with hands or brushes and to walk in the paint with bare feet on the floor! You can imagine the mess, but what a great time we all had. It must have stimulated the residents a lot, which was, of course, partly the aim, the other was to get them to be aware of themselves.

I really enjoyed having Amy and we had a good relationship. Later a student of Art Therapy came, and later still came, a trained Art Therapist. Amy and Daverell came together for a while. Amy got disillusioned by the non-co-operation of the Department, so stopped coming. This was very sad.

One week we had staff training, during which we closed the Department, and Amy gave us a session. She gave us all a piece of paper and told us to draw – anything! I did a design, making it up as I went on – it looked good! From complaints of “I can’t draw” (I said I can’t draw objects or people or anything natural), she said all humans can – some better than others, but all can draw.

We had other subjects – it was a good week really, but the staff didn’t seem too keen. Later we had Playtrac [*A South-East England training consultancy specialising in learning disabilities*], a couple of women came from Save the Children Fund and taught us how to make things from rubbish. I made a matching game with wood. First I cut or sawed a large piece of wood into a square and divided it into smaller squares. Then I painted a design, which became progressively more complex, in the squares. Then I cut small squares to match, and painted them with identical shapes – designs. As it was too complex for our residents, we eventually gave it to the Gateway Club.

Playtrac came several times and they would work with us in the rooms with our residents and give us ideas, and advice. They pointed out that they felt we should treat the adults as adults however brain damaged they are. In other words, don’t play with dolls and sing nursery rhymes or call them “children” and “boys and girls”. That was a revelation to me. They don’t mean go above their capabilities, but remember they have lived many years and are not babies physically. It’s all a matter of common sense to a large extent, but they do need stimulating, etc.

The psychologist, Marcus, also made visits to our rooms and he would observe and criticise where necessary. He was very helpful and encouraging to me and I was glad of his visits.

The Soft Play area was built about two years ago. This is a lovely place and was decorated by two artists and designers in lovely bright colours, bright colours for the objects as well as the large room. Squares and triangles and oblongs were intermingled on the walls and coloured all differently. It is lovely. The floor and walls are padded with brightly coloured big, thick pads and there are separate ‘boxes’ and other various shapes, all very soft, some piled on top of each other. There is a tunnel, steps, slide, swing and a

huge see-through ball with little coloured balls in it, and oblong light blue shapes which can be thrown. It is great fun in there and some of the residents love it. It is also peaceful, and no matter how much anyone bounces about it is impossible for them to hurt themselves. We, staff, had a training session by the designers before being allowed to take our residents in. Now other people from the hospital and outside use the Soft Play area. We had a grand opening ceremony, with many guests.

I joined the Salmon Club about three years ago, which is a swimming club for handicapped people, physical and mental. It meets on Sundays at lunch time and is £1 a year. Two or three each week came from the mentally handicapped people's hostel near Cell Barnes Hospital, so, although initially I accompanied a lady, Hannah (from Wales), I found I was very drawn to these others. There is also a fellow, Malcolm, from near where I live who is slightly retarded, and we have become good friends. Most of the hostel people were known to me; Mary used to come to Rangers. We spend most of our time in the little pool which, incidentally, is nice and warm and good for the arthritic clients. I try to encourage them to swim a bit – the mentally handicapped folk that it – but it is not easy for them as they have no confidence. However, we have great fun, splashing etc. They enjoy just being there. Malcolm would love to swim and does try, but, as he says, his legs “won't come up”, however much he “tells them to”!

We have the Annual General Meeting each year followed by a party with a big feast, and usually entertainment on an organ by a mentally handicapped boy. They present various medals and certificates. Each year, we also have a sponsored swim for the Heart Foundation, and raise large sums. The swimmers are, of course, the clients. The club is very popular.

Now, at Recreations, we had a training to explain Room Management, which means one staff member looks after all the people except one and the other [*staff member looks after*] the one only. It was quite successful, and we tried it several times. Later on we made programmes, but I would refer you to the supplement for details.



Figure 9 A Toc H Project with Cell Barnes residents

Christmas time was very busy, and we enjoyed decorating our rooms. I think the residents also enjoyed all the sparkle. Unfortunately, Christmas was not so pleasant for me at the Department as there were so many discos and I didn't like the noise. I was also of the opinion it wasn't good for the residents. More and more, as the staff ratio dwindled, we all had to get involved with the parties and discos over the years, and evening work, which involved discos nearly all the time, was everyone's job. I helped at the cinema evenings rather than discos and for a while that was the only evening I worked.



*Figure 10 Christmas on a ward at Cell Barnes*

The cinema shows were each Tuesday evening. This was quite enjoyable especially as before the film started, as I was able to talk to the residents as they came in. There were full-length feature films, some better than others. We had to lower the blinds to darken the hall, and quite often a resident would help. I remember Ian, a resident, was especially helpful to me at the end of the film. I would put my bike in the hall for safety and he would take it back to Bryn Centre where Jim, my husband, would be waiting for me to take me (and bicycle) home, and Ian would help put the bike in the car while I would, more than likely, be taking a resident back to his or her ward. All my friends would come to the cinema – it was lovely to see them. Nurses from the various wards would come, so we were able to relax during the showing of the film.

We also had a live show most years, and sometimes a carol sing-song which was, of course, pleasant. The church is in the Recreation Department, the altar being opened up from behind blinds, and one year I helped with a Nativity Play on the Sunday when we dressed several excited residents in their costumes.



We often had funerals in the church. Sometimes we, staff, would attend, but latterly we were told to have our residents and not cancel them, so we had to keep in our rooms. I was glad because they didn't miss their groups. However, it was through this contact with church activities that I met Rev. John Woolley and Barbara his assistant. So, after I left the Recreations, I asked if I could help him with his voluntary work at the hospital. More about that later.

First, I must tell you how I came to leave. I have mentioned discos and evening work, and what with pressure of work, all round I was getting very tired and constantly becoming ill with colds and flu. I began to feel like I could no longer easily occupy the residents as I would like – altogether it was all too much. So, very reluctantly indeed, I left. They, the staff, gave me a lovely plant and a card and cards from various staff and residents. Amy and Daverell, the Art Therapists, gave me a box of liqueurs!

I was very reluctant to leave the residents who had received so much care and stimulation, not only from me of course. I felt there was no-one sufficiently interested in carrying on the good work. I had a week's holiday due to me, which I was reluctant to take, but Meg insisted I took it. This was about two weeks before I left, so I spent that week typing the notes about the residents and their progress. Just before I left, however, Tess came and said she had been asked to take on my group and, knowing all the background, would try to carry on as we had. So she and Cathy, a very nice, conscientious girl, took over, and are still looking after 'my' group of very-dear-to-me residents. So I left a much happier person.



*Figure 11 A Toc H project with a group from Cell Barnes on a trip to Oxford*

## Voluntary Work

So to voluntary work. I was, as I said, very sad to leave and especially to lose contact with the residents. So I asked Meg, the Sister in charge, if I could help and she said she'd love me to. So I saw the Voluntary Organiser, Janet, who gave me the official form. As the Recreation work was 'out' for me, as they were preparing for Christmas and not having the groups so much, until after the festive season, I was restless! I offered to help in any way elsewhere, and was asked to help start a library for the residents. We worked on preparing books, and even went to a meeting of the Talking Newspaper people; to their studio. It was an open evening and they showed us how the studio worked, it was just like a BBC studio. They send tapes all over the place to blind people – it was most interesting. We finished with a lovely supper. However, after a short time I opted out of this library work, as I didn't think it was the job for me.

Later I was also given an interview with Rev. John Woolley in his office, and during our discussions I mentioned I could type. So he told me he wrote and published books and would I help with the manuscripts, insisting I would get "remunerated". I gladly agreed and, on and off, have had some very fascinating typing, some very large amounts taking about a week's work, others smaller. John presented me with one of his books which I treasure. I have also visited him in his office (with Jim) at Hill End Hospital. John is Chaplain to both Cell Barnes and Hill End Hospitals, the latter being a psychiatric hospital. I feel all this is a great privilege, and a Christian enterprise. John does help lots of people to face their hardships as cheerfully as possible. One book tells stories of such people who are facing, or have faced, very trying times and overcome them amazingly.

Soon after Christmas Meg got me to come in on Wednesdays at Recreations and this was a great delight for me. Also I went in on Friday afternoons, which meant I was in the hall for the Ranger meetings. I was given complete responsibility quite often, as the staff had their days off, and more often than not had my own group, on my own. It was very satisfying to know I still belonged.

However, I began to feel that, maybe, I should be elsewhere. At this point the Day Centre at our church came into being and into my life. It all started when our church was completely modernised for use in the community and for the community. We had planned to have all this done, which included the pews being taken out, and also the organ, and the work was about half-way from completion when it was almost completely gutted by fire; only the outer 'shell' was left. Work started again and a great job was done, far better (because of insurance money) than was originally envisaged. Then MIND, the society for the mentally ill, started a coffee morning for depressed or distressed people, and I joined this as soon as I could, walking down in all weathers! Later a nurse and two staff members were employed and very soon indeed they organised an extension of the coffee morning to lunch and all day (the MIND people handing over from 12.0 noon). Then they organised a drop-in scheme for unemployed and homeless or bed and breakfast people, and then an old folks' group and a terminally ill group. Also they had training sessions for us volunteers.

Much more recently they organised a day on Wednesdays for mentally handicapped folk, to my utter delight. We had a pre-starting tea party for all those who were coming, and surprise, surprise, I knew most of them! About five come from Cell Barnes Hospital, and others I knew from various occasions. As most of the residents and other handicapped people go to work it was inevitably retired people or those who could not work. Muriel, from a nearby hostel, already comes to the Monday club and stays all day, and also, incidentally, to church on Sundays. Now she comes on Wednesdays as well.

I am in my element, and to make it all perfect, Anne, my slightly spastic friend from dancing, comes to help on both days, having just started Wednesdays. She says she is more relaxed on Wednesdays. Would you believe it? – I know some of the nurses who bring them. Pauline is a dear, and she worked at Recreations, being in charge, for a while during my time there as a volunteer.



Figure 6 Joyce (Standing far left) at a later period of her life (Heartsease Gateway Club).  
Copyright Steve Smith

The people love coming on Wednesdays. They are happy and relaxed and we play games, sing songs and make things or paint pictures. We also go for walks which sometimes include shopping, and do musical exercises. The main thing is we do what we enjoy. Some of them help with lunch on occasions. One Wednesday we had a party for Jenny and some fellows who were leaving, and, after a friend came with his portable organ, we sang all the old songs very enthusiastically indeed.



Some of the folk who come Wednesdays from Cell Barnes Hospital attend the old folks' Starlight Centre there. It was opened about two years ago by Barbara Cartland, who was all in pink with a huge pink hat. Many of the residents from various wards were taken to see the opening. The Centre was gaily decorated with bunting. One of the residents was so impressed with Barbara Cartland that he bowed, thinking she was the Queen! She and her chauffeur, Nigel, who is also her cook, have been most helpful since then, and some of the Starlight Centre folk have been to her house on more than one occasion.



*Figure 12 Celebrating an anniversary of the Starlight Rooms. Nigel, Barbara Cartland's chauffeur/cook is second from the right*

Now we are up to date, but I'm sure there'll be much more for me to do with the handicapped people, whom I love so much. I always say they have a great contribution to make; they care for each other and they haven't the inhibitions some 'normal' folk have. And I also say the world would be a sadder place without them. I only wish they were more appreciated and accepted than they are. We are all handicapped in some way – who is 'normal' – I'm not, are you?

## Extras

### Number 1

When delving into my papers from various sources, I came across the copy of a Ward 6 Meeting of staff on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1976, at 1.00 p.m. There is a list of those attending, which includes Stan and Violet both of whom I have mentioned. Others I remember quite well. Carlos was one, and we were good friends and still are. He used to like to 'take charge' although he was only a nursing assistant. We used to have some fun with him and call him "charge nurse Carlos". He was from Portugal I believe. Mrs. Oliver was on Ward 6 for many years, long before I came. (Later when she died, they planted a rose outside the ward in her memory, and had a little ceremony with John Woolley.)

At the meeting we discussed all sorts of things from suggesting the female staff should have a separate changing room, various repairs, and suggestions that some residents were too old for the children's ward. Also a more varied diet was discussed. It was fascinating to find this 'document'.

### Number 2

MENCAP'S FLOAT: This is a fascinating story, and it happened in 1987 on the August Bank Holiday weekend Carnival in St. Albans. MENCAP (the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults) always have a float, but although we have seen it, we have never been involved in its construction. But this year I asked if help would be welcome and they said "yes". I also booked to take part in a picnic after we had processed.

However, in the weeks prior to the construction of the float, the idea needed to be planned. The theme for all floats was "The Sound of Music". One of the men drew up a professional plan, others obtained wood, some was donated, and the trumpet was made (a huge copy of the HMV trumpet you see on records with the dog).

The float was being constructed at London Colney, and Jim and I arrived about 10.00 on Saturday morning. One person was there and nothing much was happening as the board, thick plywood, and tools was on its way. There was the huge trumpet, like the ones on old fashioned gramophones, which, as I have said, you see on 78 records with dog – His Master's Voice. Later, all the necessary wood, tools and equipment arrived and it was unbelievable to see the hard work put in by the men for the foundations and the ladies and handicapped members who did various painting, rolling newspapers, cutting letters out, and a hundred other things. By the afternoon about twenty five people arrived to help, and even more came on Sunday.

There was a huge metronome on the front, a music box in the middle, and the trumpet was at the back with the dog. Also, on the back of the lorry, was an 'organ' made out of newspapers. The float was called 'MENCAP'S MUSIC MACHINE' and, apart from some orange, it was in black and white and we were all asked to dress in black and white. It

looked most grand and we were so proud to get 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in our class. Also we were pictured in the local paper.

The procession down the hill and through the High Street was great fun and we collected lots of coins. The picnic was beautifully arranged as a lovely buffet meal. We stayed until 4pm when they took the float back to London Colney for dismantling. The sun shone! A great day.

### Number 3

The Ranger Guide Unit has now become the Trefoil Guild, as the members are now too old to be Rangers. As mentioned previously, I obtained the tapes of the exercises and we have great fun with them. We have learnt and performed most of the exercises and made about twenty-four small flags which are needed with some of the exercises.

These exercises are very good. They are for mentally handicapped adults so are easy for them to understand and learn, and there are instructions and illustrations for the leader. The tape plays the music about three times for the performers, and then there is a single repeat with spoken instructions for the benefit of the leader. We always wait for it and do the exercise "with the lady" to see if we've done it right!

The members loved making the flags out of old camp dresses, and fixing them on broom handles which were cut up in small lengths by Jim.

### Number 4

Not long ago, Val who used to work at Recreations, phoned and asked me to help her take out one of her group members of whom she was especially fond. We now take him out in her car about once a fortnight. This is my last 'EXTRA' to date.

Latterly, as well as Mark we also take out Charlie one of my favourites who was in my group. The Sister, Martha, on his ward surprised me by saying he likes a drink in a pub, so, on his second outing, I took him to the Barley Mow at Tyttenhanger and he had half a pint of beer. It gives me great pleasure to have this further contact with Charlie.

I often visit the hospital to see various residents for this or that reason, and the staff make me feel so welcome, treating me as one of them and not a visitor. It is lovely to feel I still belong.

## Supplement

(Reports I made just prior to leaving Recreations)

AIMS OF THE GROUPS

NOVEMBER 1985

The main thing I try to do is give the residents a calm and happy atmosphere. To make them feel welcome and not over pushed into activities. At the same time they need 'stretching' to reach their potential, and I am grateful for the training I received from Mandy in the first instance, which I try to uphold as far as I am able without stress either to myself or the residents.

It is difficult not to shout at them at times, but I have always agreed that the quiet command is better, with a low, quiet voice which can be just as commanding as a shout but it has the advantage of not frightening the residents. So you get respect and love instead of fear.

We have tea pouring each day and much mess is made, but I feel that it is an important activity. Also not to rush it, and to enjoy it with them possibly drinking and eating with them. It is a homely activity which I feel is vital, and enjoyable to both them and me.

Music is important; sometimes we just sit quietly and listen to music. It is therapeutic to both parties!

I try to keep to the programmes. I also believe it is important to keep them occupied for the whole time. I do not insist on them cleaning up as I feel it is not meaningful to the residents.

I also believe that is not worth doing anything at all unless they understand and appreciate what is going on. It must be their work and not staff. Days like Easter, Christmas and others, they don't understand, but they do enjoy seeing the twinkles and something happening out of the ordinary.

There are several things I have neglected, I am sure, like getting some musical instruments, taking them to a restaurant, etc. I hope those following me will implement these.

I feel it is important to treat the residents as people. I also do not encourage talking to staff and excluding the residents.

PLEASE NOTE I typed these notes, as I may have mentioned elsewhere, for the interest and possible guidance of members of staff who will be taking over 'my' groups. So I have just copied them as they are.

## PROGRAMME

MONDAYS: we have music and movement sessions to the Educational Rhythmics tapes. The movements I have made up are: (to one of the tapes)

Arms up, arms down (4 times)

To the side, about 3 times

Down and round to the right

Down and round to the left.

There is a repeat with a song and we have actions to that, which are appropriate.

Also MONDAYS, we have “extensive greetings” immediately after the usual greetings. This is when each one in turn goes to all members of the group at a time and shakes hands with that person and, if possible, looks them in the eye. Some are more cooperative than others but I insist all do it. Charlie will perform this on his own, with prompting, and knows what is expected of him.

OTHER DAYS: Cooking sessions consist of making cheesecakes, instant whips, or cutting up fruit of various kinds. We have fun with pineapples. I try to get them to do as much as possible, from opening the packet to stirring, and of course to serving and eating. I do not feel it is beneficial for them to make cooked cakes, as they do not understand the process of cooking in the oven. I get them to help wash up if time.

With Art Work, again I do not believe it is any point in getting them to do anything unless they understand, so art work is very basic indeed.

FRIDAYS: is games and drama. We have a lovely soft ball and play with that. Also we enjoy playing “Poor Jenny” and “The Farmer’s in his Den”. I did try to get them to do playing with things in make believe (without the actual article) but did not feel they were up to understanding the play.

(This was written as information for members of staff taking over my group. There were other activities and these are mentioned in many of the individual reports)

GROUP 1: Josh, Charlie, Megan, Larry, Dennis, Jeff, Mike,

GROUP 2: Cathy, Suzie, Helen, Vickie, Matt, Graeme, Nigel, Brendan.



*Figure 13 Copyright Mencap*

## JOSH – Group 1

Josh has become a great friend, and smiles on arrival and likes to hold my hand on the journey back to the ward.

### Progress

Josh no longer screams and waves his hands about, except a little when a plane or tractor passes. He used to get very excitable and grab mine or another's hands and dig his nails in. This no longer occurs. He is more willing to do as he is told and puts his card he likes to flick down on request (he likes to do this himself, it is not a good idea to take it from him).

The main progress is with water and tea cups. It was not possible to bring in a tray of cups of tea as he would rush and upset some. We now pour tea, and he gets excited but, at a command or sometimes on his own initiative, sits down and waits his turn patiently. I used to have to serve him first, but now he waits for up to five or more residents to pour their tea.

No way, in the past, could we bring in a bowl of water unless we were willing to have it all over the floor – Josh would rush up and deliberately upset it. Now I often bring in a bowl

of water and he again takes his turn to wash his hands or wash up. However, it is not wise to leave the room unattended with a bowl of water handy, as Josh gets great pleasure in upsetting it still!

Josh is not keen at all in the Soft Play area, so I do not try and force him, but let him know he is welcome. Geoffrey, from his ward, succeeded in getting him in one day for a brief period.

When going for walks Josh tends to want to go back on his route to the ward, but gentle persuasion gets him to follow and come with everyone else.

He will, on occasions, paint a few strokes, but is not one for activities other than flicking his card. I wish the Art Therapist could come again. I get Josh to play ball a bit, and he grins with pleasure rather than cooperation! He will sit obediently for games like "Poor Jenny", and seems to enjoy it.

With music and movement, again he can be led to it, but not for long. But he likes the attention and grins and chuckles.

I think Josh has reached his potential with me, but hopefully others can do more.

P.S On 29<sup>th</sup> October Josh put the shaped pieces in the pot for about two minutes – some completely unaided.

## CHARLIE – Group 1

Charlie has autistic tendencies. When I first knew him he was completely unapproachable, but there has been a marked improvement. The things he now does which he did not are:

Looks me in the face,  
Smiles,  
Holds my hands for a limited time,  
Sits on his chair when asked.

Charlie likes a tickle at times. He also likes to be useful, and will take the tray of empty cups out to the kitchen, and go with Andrew or me to make the tea.

As far as tea drinking is concerned he has improved and will often drink most, if not all, of the tea. He is not keen on a biscuit or other food, but I have insisted on him saying “No thank you, Joyce” instead of “ge ‘away there” and I don’t force him to eat in any way.

Another thing he likes is to be given bits of used tissue to put in the bin (where he loves to crouch)

Sometimes Charlie comes shopping with me, or someone else. He appears to enjoy this very much and holds my hand at times. He is not too keen when in the shop, and screams and fidgets a bit.

With Art work, Charlie enjoys crayoning best; his concentration is as short as ever. But I encourage him to come back several times at intervals. He enjoys cutting; I hold the paper while he operates the scissors with two hands.

We go into the Soft Play area at times, but Charlie hides under the tunnel or in a corner. I don’t think he gets any pleasure but is willing to stay.

Charlie doesn’t escape from the room as much as he used to. Lately he doesn’t seem to be chewing so many dog ends.

TO CONCLUDE: I feel Charlie is very nervous and so it is best not to force him, or shout at him. To get his confidence and love is much more important. He is really very cooperative considering his “autism”.

(As Charlie goes to the toilet on his own, I try to make sure he washes his hands, and so I take him back to the toilet and insist he does this; he is not keen, but knows what is expected).

P.S. Charlie does, on rare occasions now, make himself sick. This, I feel is when he is distressed especially when forced to eat or drink. Lately the last few weeks, he had not chewed dog ends at all.



## MEGAN – Group 1

Megan is reasonably intelligent, but is scared when approached as if expecting to be hit. She is constantly on the move and seeks anything to eat or drink. If something is left out she will spot it and wait until the member/s of staff are not looking, or if the room is left with no staff, and will take the opportunity and eat and drink all she can find. When discovered she knows she has done wrong, and I endeavour to 'punish' her immediately. I do not believe it is any good prolonging the 'punishment' i.e. say "No tea" later, as I can't think she would remember.

### PROGRESS:

Megan will do anything on request, like 'sit down', or 'take your coat off' etc. However, she is very restless and wanders around the room if she can. (It is important to escort her back to the ward, as she can wander, but she will follow quite happily wherever you want her to go.) If you call her she will come obediently.

Megan pours her own tea expertly, the only thing is she will fill the cup to overflow. We used to put the tea in first, but now it is the milk first, and Megan tends to give herself a cup of milk!

When cooking Megan mixes mixtures, but doesn't get the round-and-round action. She will serve herself helpings of whatever it is onto the plate without prompting.

A fault of Megan' is that she spits a bit on the floor. I am quick to remonstrate with her. Apparently she is worse on the ward.

With art work, Megan is not too keen, but will have a go and dab bits of paint or crayon on the paper. She enjoys cutting bits out of paper, and this she accomplishes on her own.

Megan seems to enjoy music and it quietens her, and she lets herself be lead into the music and movement quite easily with not much stiffness.

When taken to the toilet, Megan will take her pants down and sit on the loo, but unless someone stays with her will jump up immediately without 'performing' and pull her pants up and go into the hall.

Megan has a tendency to make a very annoying cooing noise. This is sometimes worse on certain days. Lately she has not been too bad.

I enjoy having Megan and I think she enjoys coming, especially when you hold her hands gently and talk to her.

## LARRY – Group 1

I haven't known Larry so long as some of the other members of the group. However, as far as progress and improvement are concerned he has made very good progress.

Larry is a shy boy, but responds to affection. He will give a lovely smile when happy. The main progress area is with tea pouring. He now holds the milk jug and teapot on his own and pours it out. Gordon (a student) can take credit for this action. Larry will take a piece of chocolate from my hand, and pick up his cup from the tray and, after drinking the tea, will put it on the tray.

However, he does need encouragement for all these actions, as it appears his brain does not easily tell his hand what to do. He enjoys doing things but cannot quite bring himself to start the movement.

When the residents come in I get them in turn (as they come) to get themselves a chair from the pile, which I deliberately leave stacked. Larry is very good at this activity.

On the journey back to the ward with Dennis we drop hands or arms at the beginning of the path back (from the Admin. Block) and Larry and Dennis are encouraged to walk on their own including up the stairs to their ward. I walk in front. Larry is very good at this as well. Sometimes we go towards wards 2 and 4, which means they have to turn right, and this puzzles Larry, but he 'catches on'.

Larry pulls up his trousers when going to the toilet – and down – without too much help and prompting. He has not progressed much with washing hands and face, but I am sure this could improve.

I am sure Larry has much potential. Being quiet and no trouble he tends to get left out.

Sometimes he resists when being led back to the ward. Is this because he likes coming to his group?

## DENNIS – Group 1

Dennis has earned himself the nickname “lazybones” and he is just that. When he comes into the room (and prior to that the hall) he sits on the nearest available chair or pile of chairs, or in fact table if there are no chairs around, and cocks his legs up and would stay like that for ages if not moved.

So I have, with prior advice, kept him involved in what is going on and when it is his turn to act have first got him to unravel himself and sit up “like a human being”. I try to do this even for the simplest of things, like saying “hallo”.

So we have progressed: although he still is the lazy one of the group. He now picks up his cup and drinks his tea and puts the cup down the right way up, all on his own. The only prompting he needs is “come on Dennis, drink your tea”. He always did, with help, put his hand up to his cup, but suddenly I saw he could do it on his own! He will let you do everything if you are so inclined.

We don’t have so much success in the toilet, but he knows he is expected to pull the plug – with help. Dennis stands up to “perform”.

Dennis will not hold the brush for painting, he just drops it or flicks it a bit before dropping it. His main joy is a box of small toys, bricks or crayons in a deep tray or box and he sits playing with them, turfing them about, for quite some time, whereupon he drops them and container all over the floor.

Lately Dennis has become much more lively, laughing and making fairly loud noises and calls. He often jumps up from his chair and leaps about the room with great pleasure. This, I feel, is a great improvement, as it means he is taking an interest in his surroundings, and is enjoying himself.

On going back to the ward with Larry (see Larry’s report), Dennis has improved immensely. At times he will just stand, but he does, mostly, come along and up the stairs with no trouble. Again sometimes he laughs and shrieks and actually runs along to catch me up.

The main problem of laziness is what is needed to be overcome with Dennis, and then I think he could do much more.

Special Achievements: 16<sup>th</sup> September:- Dennis was looser and more cooperative with music and movement.

30<sup>th</sup> August:- Dennis took me to the toilet.

6<sup>th</sup> November:- When in the hall, first thing, Dennis saw me get Larry up, so he jumped up and followed. (Usually it is a big job to get him up).

## JEFF – Group 1

Jeff is a gentle, elderly man, rather set in his ways. He loves routine and comes in the room and gets a chair and puts it in the same place – in front of the cupboard! He doesn't like being pushed into doing anything, especially art work.

However he does enjoy pouring out his tea and really tries to do it on his own. He will reach out for the jug and teapot, but owing to his being partially blind it is not safe to let him do this unaided. He will go to the toilet on his own, but needs help with washing himself. He usually goes when it is suggested and, on occasions, will go without being asked.



*Figure 14 Copyright Mencap*

Jeff loves music. Also he will try and sing the words to “How much is that Doggie in the Window?” and say “woof, woof” after the lines. (This I learnt he does from Tess). Also if you ask him what his name is he will say “Jeff Dove”.

He is a little wary of the Soft Play place, so I do not force too much on him. I do, however, take him round the various things and get him used to the strangeness.

I am not sure how much Jeff has progressed, but the main thing is that I have got to know him and of what he is capable, and he seems to enjoy coming.

One thing I have tried to do is get him to bring his coat into the room and not leave it in the hall anywhere. He takes it off himself (not undoing the buttons)

Because of his age, I feel he should not be pushed too much, but just left to become one of the group and to feel happy to come.

I have got a note that on 28<sup>th</sup> August Jeff poured his tea unaided.

Jeff enjoys the cooking sessions, although he thinks the stirring time is feeding time! When we have biscuits with tea I put it in a saucer (the biscuit) of warm milk/tea or just water until it is soft, as he cannot chew.

## MIKE – Group 1

Mike is a likeable, lively person. The main problem is to keep him reasonably calm, at the same time letting him get rid of his natural energy. I don't think it is wise to let him get too excited for his sake or the others. He will climb on a member of staff's back if encouraged and get more and more worked up until it is a little difficult to calm him. His great gimmick is to imitate having fits, but he is NOT epileptic it is just play acting.

During August 1985, one day Mike surprised me by getting the chairs off the pile one by one without asking. By the way Mike is totally blind. Each day I let him do the same, but lately we have tried to get him to get just his chair like everyone else.

Mike asks to go to the toilet when he first arrives and I take him and leave him and fetch him later. If he is left too long, however, he washes himself and his face and his hair and gets water everywhere. I have been trying to get him just to wash his hands and face, it's a battle!

Mike likes to try to pour his tea and milk, but unless helped he pours it, just, over the cup. Hopefully, in time he will learn.

A great past-time for Mike is crayoning, but he does just constant circles. He will try and take part in other activities, art, quite willingly.

Another great pastime is the Soft Play area. Mike loves tumbling and has no fear. He tends to be rather rough with anyone, usually a fellow, who has a romp with him. Again it is not wise to over excite him.

Of course, Mike loves cooking, which he does well.

PROGRESS: has been made in that Mike and I know each other, and he knows when he has done wrong. He does over apologise though, over and over again. This is, I suppose, for attention. I think he is calmer on request. Also he doesn't ask for the toilet so much. Mike will help carry the tables quite readily and efficiently.

I do enjoy having Mike, but he is a little overpowering at times.

Mike does enjoy Fridays when we have the games and drama games. He is always the first to volunteer starting. He also enjoys Music and Movement, and is cooperative, but does like to do his version as well. When any music is on Mike jumps about and raises his arms up and down in time to the music.

## CATHY – Group 2

Cathy is a loveable girl and I enjoy having her. Her main asset is her voice and she often sings things like “Here we come round the Mulberry bush” in good tune.

I don’t know why she likes to sit or kneel on the floor all the time, but I have tried to encourage her to sit on a chair. This she does obediently for a while, but soon goes back to the floor. I am also trying to stop her picking her nose, again she stops obediently for a while....

Cathy loves rattley toys and I have got several for her. She sometimes bangs them on the radiator. I let her make a noise for a time and then stop it. She obviously likes rattley noises and noises in general, like her voice, and music.

Other than these activities Cathy does not seem able to cope with anything more advanced. She knows when it is tea time and sits up to the table well, and holds her hand out to pour the tea and milk, but will not grip the handles. She will drink her tea well by herself alright.

Also when we have cooking sessions Cathy is not too good at the making stage, but alright when it comes to eating! She seems to know what is going on however, and makes her lovely happy noises.

I cannot get her to do art work with any success, but she does like the box of ‘rubbish’ which we use for collages. She will take everything out and play happily for as long as I let her.....on the floor.

Cathy needs to be taken to the toilet. She will ‘go’ alright, but gets up and wanders into the hall and the piano (which she plays) without pulling her pants up. She needs watching. Cathy knows the piano is in the hall and, on rare occasions, she will leave the room for the hall to play the piano.

PROGRESS? She enjoys coming down to the group. The fact that she takes any part as indicated above is, I suppose, progress. When I attended the very interesting review in the ward, they said it is important to keep Cathy occupied. This I try to do, even if it is only to make sure she has a rattle to play with. I always try to be aware of Cathy and never to just let her ‘drift’.

## SUZIE – Group 2

Suzie is quite an intelligent person, but unfortunately she is very sensitive and afraid of any sharp voice or action.

When Suzie arrives I say, quietly, “Hallo, Suzie, what about a cuddle?” She puts her arms out and I give her a sort of a cuddle, which she enjoys and has come to expect. I think this greeting is very important to her.

If I am sharp with any of the others, or if there is a lot of noise, Suzie gets upset and bites her hands. It is difficult to keep the atmosphere calm, especially when the others perhaps benefit from a bit of excitement and activity.

The things Suzie does well and above the average compared to the others include:

Taking off her coat and folding it up,  
Pouring her tea, but being partially blind, needs help,  
Puzzles (I have two special ones),  
Sits in her chair to go home (wheelchair) and pulls her coat round her legs,  
Washing up.

Suzie is good with music and movement, so long as she is gently treated. If you want her to get up off her chair for some activity she resists at first but as you gently explain and encourage her she is quite happy to oblige.

When we have cooking, Suzie stirs the mixture well. Also if we wash up afterwards she will wash the things with a cloth well, and put them down on the table in quite a normal way.

Suzie likes to go for walks, and also goes to the toilet with all the actions connected very well.

I enjoy Suzie’s company, and only hope she can have the peace and quiet she needs.

In October I discovered that Suzie can point to her eyes, nose and mouth on request. (We did art pictures of faces and related them to their own faces). She knows her ears as well.

## HELEN – Group 2

Helen is a very lovable and lively person. She needs a lot of love and is always seeking attention by jumping up from her chair and grabbing me and going to another chair. She used to scream nearly all of the session, fortunately this has virtually dropped, though she does have 'bad days', but in no way is she as bad as she used to be.

Tea time means a great deal to Helen, and she will push me or another to the tables 'asking' us to get them out for tea pouring. The funny thing is that when she has got her tea she is not so keen to drink it, but usually does in the end. Then she will ask for more! She loves going into the kitchen to help make the tea, and takes an interest in all that is going around her.

However, the strange thing about Helen is that although she is interested in everything going on she will NOT take part personally. If you give her a brush to paint with she will either put it down or suck it. The only thing she does do is to hold the jug and teapot handles, not very well, and pour out (though I can't claim she does anymore than lightly hold on a bit).

PROGRESS: She doesn't scream nearly as much. This, I feel, is a great improvement, and hopefully means she is happier and feels secure. Helen used to resist on being asked to go out for a walk or to play outside, but this is not so bad now. She seems to like the room and presumably feels secure.

After tea she is anxious to go to the toilet, but quickly goes back afterwards. Again, Helen knows and takes an interest in pulling the plug and washing hands, but doesn't help.

I love having Helen, and shall miss her a lot.



## VICKIE – Group 2

Vickie is handicapped because she is in a wheelchair, and is very stiff. Her left hand is more active than her right. I think it would be lovely if she could be given a bean bag and got out of her chair for all or part of the session.

Apart from this, Vickie is quite intelligent and interested and keen to do things. She will enjoy having a go at painting, and when pouring tea, reaches out for the jug and it and would pick it up by herself if given the chance. She also likes music, and music and movement, and is very cooperative.

Vickie seems to enjoy coming and is always smiling. When I go to fetch her, just lately, she screams with delight as soon as she catches sight of me. I feel so much more could be done with her. Perhaps the Physiotherapist could help.

When we have music and drama on Fridays she enjoys this immensely. I get her fully involved in the drama games as much as possible. It is easy to let her be, or to leave her out, as she is good humoured. Mondays, when we have 'extensive greetings' I get everyone to go to her left side and shake her hand, and when it is Vickie's turn she goes to everyone in turn. This is laborious but worth while.

Vickie tries to hold the cup to drink her tea, but cannot quite achieve this as it bends her arm too much. She also finds swallowing difficult, but with patience can be helped to drink her tea. I think she has improved quite a bit.

Vickie is a handful in that she wants and needs to do things, but physically is not so able. I feel that it is vital that she has all the stimulation she needs.

## MATT – Group 2

Matt is a loveable boy with a revolting habit of regurgitation! I wanted to have him to see if, (a) I could tolerate his habit, and (b) could do anything about it. I feel I have done both (not boasting) over a period of time. Matt does come in in a disgusting way and grabs a cup, box or like object. However, after trying by hoyking out the food from his mouth, which did nothing, I hit on the idea of taking the object/s from him until his mouth is clear. This seems to work sometimes after ten to fifteen minutes, other times a good bit longer. But he does clear in the end, though still dribbles on and off. If I take him out for a walk, (I take him each Thursday to fetch Vickie), he is very good and doesn't even dribble.

So that comes under PROGRESS.

Also Matt would not sit down when asked or at all, but stay in his corner. Now he will sit down, although sometimes I have to ask him two or three times in a commanding voice.

Matt is not so good at cooperating with activities, but again I include him and insist he has a go. With music and movement he sits on the floor or kneels, thinking he has got the better of me.....

Matt will go to the toilet, and will pull his trousers up, not very well. He needs help with the other toilet activities, but is partially helpful.

Another bad habit is helping himself to other peoples' tea. He needs watching, and immediate 'punishment'. I am sure he knows this is wrong, but doesn't seem to learn. Sometimes I bypass him when we are having second cups of tea, but don't prolong this. I am not sure how to deal with this, however.

Matt does enjoy music, and his chief enjoyment is to go to the tape recorder and put his ear to it and often pick it up for this reason. He needs watching, but I do let him have quite a bit of freedom to do this.

Do not leave sugar about – he makes a terrible mess of himself.

## GRAEME – Group 2

I have known Graeme for many years. In this time I have noted a deterioration in his habit of dribbling and sucking his hand. In fact I don't think he used to this is at all when I first knew him, or not much. He was not blind when I first knew him. He always used to stick his tongue out, and we worked on that by trying to encourage him to keep his tongue in. So for me it is sad to see Graeme so tied up in himself that he has to suck his hand all day.

We have acquired a see-through ball toy with a tinkle noise when moved. This is the main object that stops Graeme with his bad habit. He simply loves this ball, and will hold it for hours to his ear. However, that is not good all the time and so I try to occupy him otherwise.

One thing I have done in the past which I think needs reviving is to put him at one end of the hall or room and call him from a distance and get him to find his way to where I am by constantly calling him. He does achieve this very slowly. I have done it a little lately, but "Graeme's game" whereby we had about six bottles and skittles on a table and one by one the members of the group came to knock them over. I abandoned this as it encouraged Graeme to throw things.

It seems that Graeme gets some pleasure in throwing anything you give him (more or less) backwards over his shoulder. Efforts to get him interested in anything else usually ends in a throw backwards. I don't think the 'game' created this, but encouraged it. So it is a little difficult to get Graeme to anything as the motivation is not there. When we play ball the same thing happens.

Graeme does like music and goes to the recorder to listen to it. He likes to dance about with a partner and gets excited at the contact. He does not keep good time to the music. In fact Graeme likes any kind of attention or contact.

Sometimes we get the puzzles Suzie has or the large jigsaw, and I try to encourage Graeme to put the pieces in. I'm afraid he couldn't care less!

Art activities are a little more productive if I chose things like drawing round his hands or finger painting. He seems to like the feel of the paint, and the attention! Plasticine or play doh, he is not really interested in, and just throws it if he gets the chance.

What Graeme really needs is a one-to-one relationship, which I have not been able to give him. This is a shame because, with time, I think Graeme would blossom. He is a loveable person, and I am glad to have him.

P.S. He has a biscuit in a saucer of warm milk or water, as for Jeff.

Graeme enjoys tea time and cooking sessions. He will pick his cup up with encouragement and drink the tea, although when he puts the cup down it is upside down! He feeds himself very slowly, but perseveres well

## NIGEL – Group 2

Nigel is a pleasant boy, but unfortunately has a progressive disease. He needs a lot of love and attention, and shakes his hands and body backwards and forwards to attract people. He loves walking about holding someone's hand, though he cannot walk unaided. He grips things well, and is reluctant to let them go. I try to get him to put things in boxes, but he is slow to do this. Getting him to put his cup on the tray like everyone else is a bit of a task, and needs much encouragement.

Nigel drinks his tea unaided, but likes the tea not too hot. He puts the cup down after, alright. He also enjoys cooking sessions.

Apart from these activities, I am afraid Nigel is not good at anything else. I get him involved in all we do as much as possible, and he does not resist.

I don't think there is anything else I can say, except that Nigel needs a loving environment, and it is important not to leave him out because he is placid and no trouble.

## BRENDAN – Group 2

Brendan is, unfortunately, both completely blind and deaf. However he is very intelligent, and (who knows) if he had been sent to a special school or hospital he would be normal. As it is, he comes to my group and I find him a loving, gentle, cooperative and willing young man. There is none of the stiffness as in other residents.

Although he cannot hear the music, when we do music and movement, he lets you do it with him with no resistance at all. I have, at times, given him the recorder and he seems to feel the vibrations.

He is very fond of anything round and anything that screws. I have a cement mixer toy which belonged to my son. This unscrews completely and Brendan loves to unscrew the screws, and does it very well. He also puts it together again with my help, but he is better at the unscrewing.

If he is sitting at a table and cannot find anything to twist and turn, etc., he will start dismantling the pictures from the wall. If left with nothing to do he gets a little disturbed, so I see he always has something even when I cannot be with him.

Brendan really of course needs a one-to-one relationship. Sometimes, if he comes early on Thursday, I have a chance to give him this, but otherwise he has to fit in with the others.

With tea pouring and cooking, Brendan really shows what he can do. He feels for the cup and pours the milk and the tea, but unfortunately needs help as he doesn't quite get it in the cup. He will put the jug and teapot down slowly and carefully, not letting go until he is sure it is safe. I don't normally give them sugar, but sometimes Brendan sits with his hand out and will not drink his tea until he has put some sugar in and stirred.

Brendan is very good at the cooking sessions, and enjoys the subsequent feast. He will stir the mixture round and round well, and help wash up. He loves to go to the sink and wash up and will do everything properly.

Brendan is good at toileting himself and will pull his pants and trousers up and fasten them. He will wash himself well. He also will pull the toilet plug.

I enjoy having Brendan, and I only wish I could do more for him.

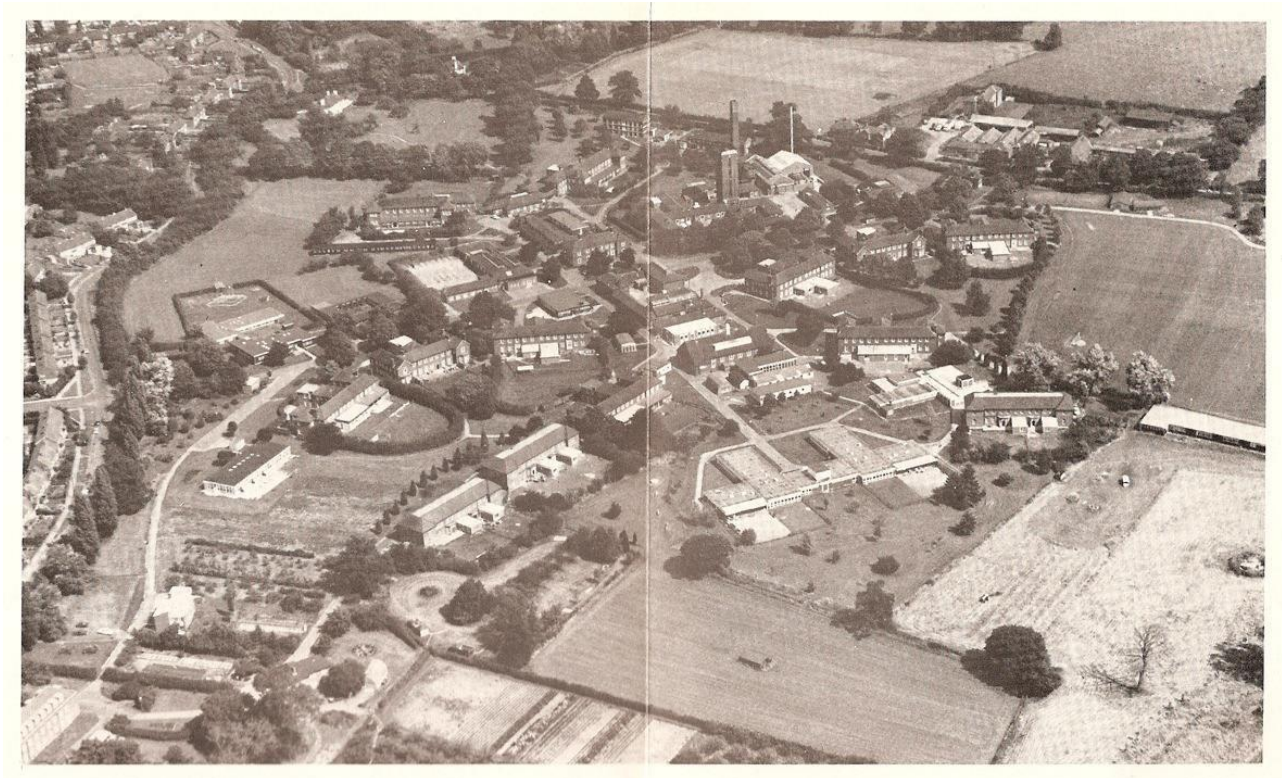
## Appendix – Cell Barnes History

### The History of the Cell Barnes Hospital Site

#### Part 1: Eight Centuries from Nunnery to Hospital

This article is reproduced from a pamphlet compiled by the Social Works Department of Cell

Barnes Hospital as their contribution to commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hospital in 1983. Although we have not sought their permission; for they no longer exist, I am sure they will not object!



#### When it all started.

Matthew Paris the 13th Century historian monk wrote that in about the year 1140 a priory dedicated to the Blessed St Mary was founded at a place called Sopwell by Geoffrey de Gorham, Abbott of St Albans. *Note: Ruins of the Nunnery can be seen along Cotton Mill Lane adjacent to the Prospect Road junction.* He framed rules for the 13 nuns who were resident, laid down that they should wear the black habit and follow the rules of St Benedict. The Abbot and other benefactors, gave properties to the nunnery, among them almost certainly Cell Barnes, in order that the rents and food grown could be used to support the nuns. The nunnery, dependent on St Albans Abbey, was called a cell (a small part) as was the custom, and we can find in the Place names of Hertfordshire that in 1332 the area later known as Cell Barnes was referred to as a Cella, in 1385 as Cellecroft and in 1436 as Sellbarne. The latter change of name is of interest as it is known that a number of barns were built in the area about that time. In 1517 there was also a Cellewood close by.

There is a record that Abbot Michael De Mentmore (1336 49) who died of the Black Death, found it necessary to make the rules stricter and to increase the nuns in residence. From then on a number of high-born ladies came to the Blessed St Mary at Sopwell.

## The Famous “Boke of St Albans”

St Albans was the third printer works in England and in 1481 and again in 1486 the “Boke of St

Albans” was produced. The author of at least part was Dame Juliana Berners writing on hawking, heraldry and a particular good treatise on angling. It was believed that the Dame was a Prioress of Sopwell and used the cell as her retreat where she would follow the activities that she wrote so knowledgeably about. Originally entitled the “Boke of Haukyng and Huntynge” this was the first printed book in the English language that featured dogs. What is almost certain is that the section on hunting came from her hand for it is signed alongside her words “Explicit Dam Julyans Barnes in her boke of Huntynge”, Dame Julians’s list of dogs reads “First there is a greyhound, a baftard, a mongrel, maftyfe, a lemor, a spanyell, kenettys, terours, bocheris houndes, mydding dogges, tryndeltayles and prikherid curris.” This list remained the sole printed contribution on dogs in English until 1576.

Local feeling is the name Cell Barnes was a corruption of her name over the years Berner’s cell, to Cell Barnes.

The last Prioress of Sopwell was Johanna Pigot who was paid a pension of £6 a year.

Anne Boleyn is reputed to have come to Sopwell to avoid London and that Henry VIII courted her there and in 1553 married her somewhere close by.

## The Great Upheaval

In 1531 the Cell Barnes part of Sopwell was leased to John and Nicholas Ayleward. When the nunnery of Sopwell was disbanded a Letters Patent was issued detailing a grant by Henry VIII to Sir Richard Lee and his wife Margaret of “divers messuages, tenements, land, wood, ground and hereditaments, part of the late dissolved Monastery of Sopwell.” It was dated in the 30th year of Henry VIII (1539). Included in the list of properties was “one messuage and all those lands call Sell

Barnes with the appertenances in the said parish of St Peter.”

Built at this time, and still standing was the property, now called Little Cell Barnes, which was just outside the hospital grounds in Cell Barnes Lane and now used as a Social Club for local residents.

## Famous Names Come to Light – some still locally known today.

Sir Richard died in 1575 and was buried in St Peters Church and the estate including Cell Barnes passed to his elder daughter Mary Coningsby, later Pemberton, and on her death the property passed to her sister Ann Sadlier who passed it on to her son Richard. In 1669 Thomas Saunders, who had married Helen Sadlier, sold the property, to Sir Harbottle Grimston of Gorehambury, whose descendants owned Cell Barnes for the next 260 years. During this time the land was leased and farmed by various families. Richard Thrale, in 1973 published a chronicle of his family entitled “A New Thraliana.” From this book we discover that in 1646 namesake Richard Thrale married Martha Aylward (see 1531) and it is possible that Martha was left Cell Barnes in the legacy from her father.

## A Farming tradition

From about 1690 Cell Barnes was farmed by members of the Thrale family until in 1736 two brothers died. We read that a niece, Anne, received household goods from Cell Barnes farmhouse. To keep the land fertile, there were cropping clauses in the lease. The first year should be fallow or turnips, the second wheat, rye or barley and the third year corn. Parts of the property were pasture. There were squabbles in the family about these conditions and about hedges and fences being ruined. In 1765 Joseph Bunn became a tenant of Cell Barnes, seven years later he was granted a 21-year lease at £75 per annum.



The first large scale map of Hertfordshire published by Drury and Andrews in 1766 includes "Sell Barnes." Close by was Sopwell Barnes and New Barnes. Between 1800-5 a large brick farmhouse was built. This was called great Cells Barn and had 208 acres. The old farm, just down the lane, was called Little Cell Barn with 140 acres.

From 1838-81 Great Cell Barnes was occupied by farmers and for the next five years Viscount Grimston is listed as occupant.

From 1901-1917 the house was the residence of the Hon. F and Mrs. F.W. Anson: Mrs. Anson was noted for her breeding of Buff Orpingtons (poultry) for show. From 1922 the occupant of the house was Viscount Encombe.

### Cell Barnes Hospital

Hill End Hospital was built in 1899 in 184 acres of grounds. An extension was built in 1907 and within a short time the Committee was searching for more land. In the 1920's 82 acres of Cell Barnes, adjoining Hill End and belonging to the Earl of Verulam came on to the market. It was purchased by Hertfordshire County Council and a "colony for mental defectives" was built, to be run in conjunction with Hill End. On the property was Great Cell Barnes House which was extended and used as a Nurses' Home. Original features in the house being preserved. The layout of the grounds was carried out by the Head Gardener George Dollimore. The Victorian Gardens close to the great house were preserved with their formal rose gardens, tree fringed lake, stables and magnificent fir trees. Note: on the closure of the hospital in 1998 the Nurses Home had long been empty and eventually the ownership was transferred to St Albans Council. By the time the current tenants – Emmaus – took occupation much of the building had been vandalised and the gardens neglected. The lake – was completely silted up and was transferred to Highfield Park Trust in 1998 – see the separate information sheet - *Cell Barnes pond on this topic*.

The Hospital was officially opened on 5th October 1933 by the Minister of Health Sir E. Hilton Young and transferred to the NHS on 1st July 1948.

Maintaining the tradition, a thriving farm was managed at Cell Barnes, growing various crops, including potatoes. Cows, pigs and poultry were kept, the produce being used by the hospital. Patients helped on the farm and in the gardens. The farm was discontinued in 1965 in line with Government policy that all hospital farms should cease.

Much additional building occurred in the Hospital over the years to accommodate staff and for administration, training and recreational centres. A very active "Friends of Cell Barnes Hospital Association was formed." H.R.H The Duke of Gloucester opened the staff and Sports Social Club in May 1958.

### ***Update: 1983 – 2008 (By John Ely Park Director 1996- 2008)***

As with Hill End Hospital, changes in the treatment of the mentally ill resulted in the inevitable closure of the Cell Barnes Hospital. There was a planning agreement for new housing and the creation of 60 acres of public open space across both hospital sites. The Hospital eventually closed in 2000. However, the process of closure was well managed, patients relocated to smaller units and with the formation of the Highfield Park Trust in 1996, the Trust was able to take "ownership" of the Park area and thus manage and control the redevelopment process – so as not to inherit, as was the case at Hill End, a neglected and vandalised landscape. The Trust also salvaged wherever possible garden benches, plants (especially roses), the puddingstone etc. to create features in the Park.

Virtually every hospital building was demolished – except the still functioning - Pill Packing Unit (PPAS), the nurses home (now Emmaus), the Nurses Training Centre (now the Birch Centre and occupied by the Ladybird's Nursery), a small Occupational Therapy Unit (Rowan House occupied by The LK Partnership) and of course West Lodge (the Park Office).

Of the farming features – the orchard still survives and we still like to think of the Buff Orpingtons busily scratching away at the ground beneath the trees!